

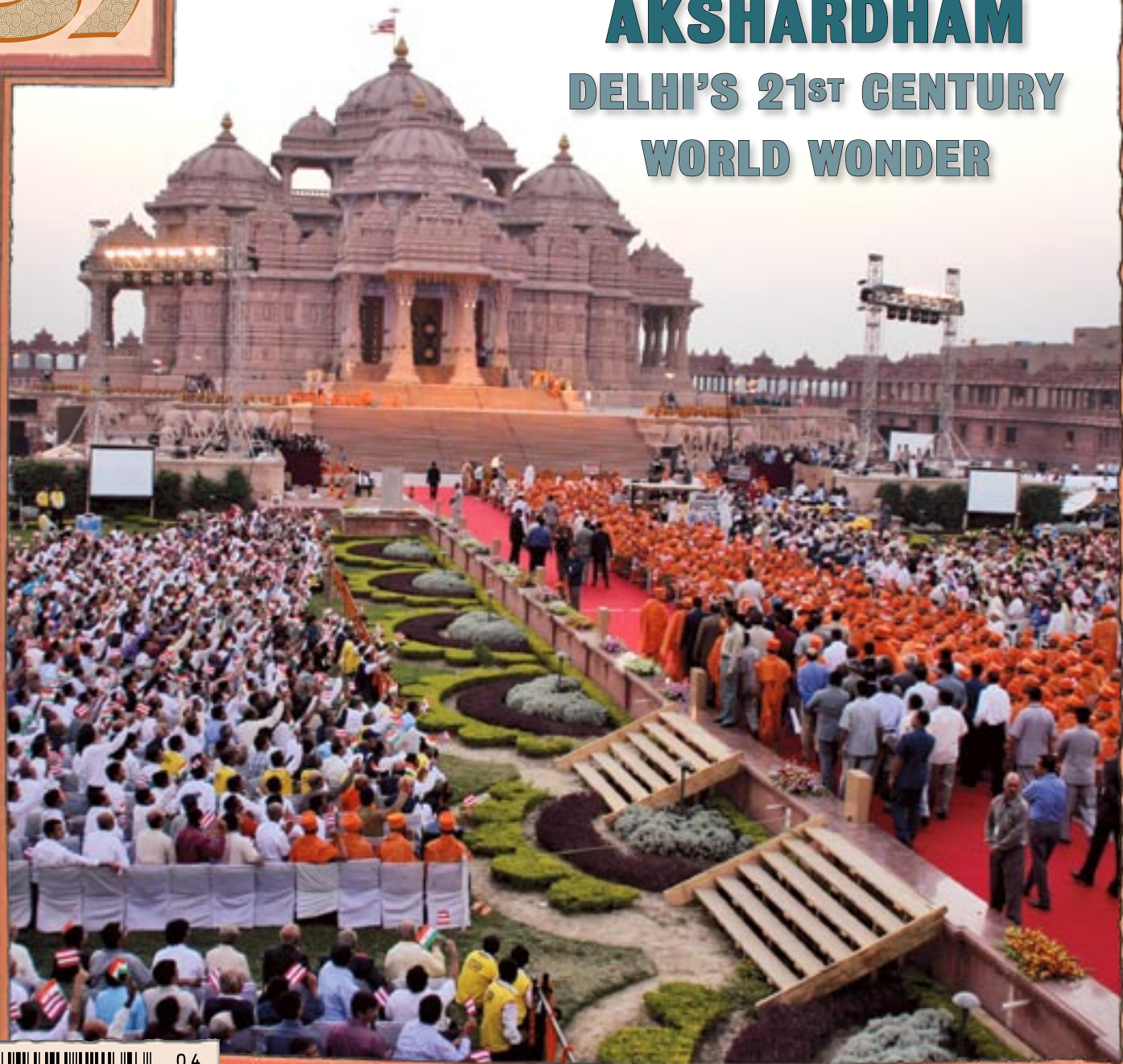
# HINDUISM TODAY

April/May/June, 2006 US\$5.95

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



## AKSHARDHAM DELHI'S 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WORLD WONDER



COVER: Pramukh Swami Maharaj leads a procession, including India's President and Prime Minister, to the opening ceremonies of Akshardham monument. (Above) Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh respectfully touches Pramukh Swami's feet.

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VYAYA, THE YEAR OF WEALTH

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# When Great Souls Meet

Organized by Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (above), the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha took place in Mumbai on October 15, 2005, featuring 74 prominent Indian swamis discussing Hindu Dharma. Page 34 ....



**Sri Nanigupal Goswami**  
*Assam*



**Sri Avadhesananda Giriji**  
*Ambala Cantt, Haryana*



**Sri Avimukteshwarananda**  
*Dwarka, Gujarat*



**Sri Prahakar Maharaj Bodhle**  
*Pandarpur, Maharashtra*



**Sri Balakananda Giriji**  
*Haridwar*



**Sri Atmaprakash Yati**  
*Dwarka, Gujarat*



**Sri Chinmayananda Sarasvatiji**  
*Varanasi*



**Sri Madhavacharyaji Maharaj**  
*Ayodhya*



**Sri Embar Jeeyar Appan Vishnucittan**  
*Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu*



**Sri Jyana Prakasa Desika**  
*Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu*



**Sri Anand Chaitanya Saraswatiji Maharaj**  
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**Sri Gurusharananandaji**  
*Mathura, Uttaranchal*



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*Mumbai*



**Sri Mahanta Swamiji**  
*Shimoga, Karnataka*



**Sri Keshavdas Maharaj Namdas**  
*Jilla Sholapur, Maharashtra*



**Sri Vidyanarsinh Bhartiji**  
*Kolhapur, Maharashtra*



**Sri Jnanadeva Singhji Maharaj**  
*Haridwar*



**Sri Haridev Goswami**  
*Assam*



# Welcome

## TO HINDUISM TODAY'S DIGITAL EDITION!

I am pleased to welcome you to the free digital edition of Hinduism Today magazine. It is the fulfillment of a vision held by my Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, to bring the magazine's profound Hindu teachings to the widest possible audience. The text of each issue has long been available on the Web, right back to 1979, but without the photographs and art. Now you have here the entire contents of the printed edition, with all photos and art. Plus, it is interactive—every link is live; click and you go to a web page. You can participate in the magazine in a number of ways, accessed through buttons on the right. And you can help support this free edition in two ways: make an online contribution (even a small one); patronize our specialized advertisers. Explore the resources here, enjoy our latest edition and e-mail us if you are inspired.

*Bodhinatha Veylanawami*

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Mata Amritanandamayi's disciples present Bill Clinton with a one million dollar check for the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund

U S A

## Hindus Help Katrina Relief

THE MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI CENTER IN THE UNITED States handed over \$1 million to the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund to aid hurricane recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast area of the United States. Swami Ramakrishnananda and Brahmachari Dayamrita Chaitanya, representing the M.A. Center, met former President Clinton on December 8, 2005, in his offices in Harlem, New York City, to present the check. The donation is one of the largest the fund—run by George Bush senior and Bill Clinton—has received from a non-government organization.



Hindu couple portrayed with Jesus on UK Christmas stamp

U K

## UK Stamp Debacle

UK ROYAL MAIL issued a 2005 Christmas stamp depicting a painting from India of a Hindu man and woman worshipping baby Jesus. The Hindu Forum of Britain objected to

the matter with postal officials, and on November 4, 2005, a decision was made to not sell the stamp unless it was specifically requested. But the decision was not conveyed to post offices, and the following week Hindus found the 68 pence stamps still being openly sold over the counter. Royal Mail finally issued the order to post offices on November 8 to hold the stamps unless specifically requested. Hindu community leaders requested Hindus in the country not to buy the stamp. Royal mail stated they would not reprint it. “We welcome Royal Mail’s assertion that they will consult us for any future use of Hindu icons,” said Ramesh Kallidai, Secretary General of the Hindu Forum of Britain. “They have said Royal Mail will review its procedures to ensure that future images are appropriately screened to avoid unintentional offence to any UK community.”

# DIASPORA

MALAYSIA

## 12-Year Rites Unveil Giant Murugan

THE FAMED BATU CAVES OF Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, held its 12-year Mahakumbhabhishekam renewal ceremonies in November, 2005. The entire temple complex at the caves has been extensively renovated. Five shrines were consecrated. It was a testimony to the vitality of Hinduism at what is the highest profile center for Lord Murugan outside India. About 50,000 devotees thronged the

congested roads to witness the Uthama Patchha (grand consecration) ceremony at the Sri Subramianiar Swamy Temple on November 13. Seventy-four priests from India, Bangkok, the United States, London and Singapore, 10 singers, 18 musicians and 11 devotional singers all took part in this auspicious ceremony—the first of its kind in Malaysia. A giant TV screen was placed at the foot of the hill for those unable to climb the 272 temple steps. On January 29, 2006, in step with a global trend of erecting colossal Hindu sculptures, the new 140-foot tall statue of Lord Murugan was unveiled.



The new 140-foot-tall golden statue of Lord Murugan dominates the entry to the vast cavern at Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur

U K

## Minority Chaplains Go to Work in UK

THE NEWLY APPOINTED Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh military chaplains were welcomed to their roles by the British Secretary of State for Defence, John Reid on November 15, 2005. The non-commissioned civilians have a three-year appointment. All but the Muslim chaplain are part-time, reflecting the small



Left to right: Mandeep Kaur (Sikh); David Wilks (Christian); John Reid, Secretary of State for Defence; Imam Asim Hafiz (Muslim); Krishan Attri (Hindu); Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana (Buddhist)

numbers of minority soldiers. UK Armed Forces have 305 Muslims; 230 Hindus; 220 Buddhists; 90 Sikhs and 65 Jews. For

the 183,000 Christians there are 300 chaplains. The new chaplains will provide spiritual, moral and pastoral support to

service personnel, conduct ceremonies, lead prayers, and teach and advise the Ministry of Defence on faith matters.

U S A / I R A Q

## Hindus Work for US in Iraq

SOME 6,000 TO 7,000 IMMIGRANTS from India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines work on US Army bases in Iraq for a monthly salary of US\$450 to \$650. It's good money compared to a job at home. Some, after travelling on a tourist visa to Dubai, enter Iraq illegally. Others are recruited by labor agencies, most to supply military contractor Kellogg Brown & Root, a Houston-based subsidiary of Hal-

iburton Corp. Muslims are not accepted for these jobs. Reportedly, without this army of low-wage earners, ages 20 to 35, US military bases in Iraq would be hamstrung. Workers sign a two or three-year contract and must pay for their own airfare if they leave early. Those involved with the rugged wartime chores have said that enthusiasm for a better lot soon fades under long hours, unexpected conflict zone posts, sub-standard living conditions and treatment as third world menials. If that weren't enough, agency fees can eat up as much as \$2,000 of their earnings.



Hindu immigrant workers pray at US army base, Mahmudiya, Iraq

U S A

## Maybe Apu Is an Asset

APU NAHASAPEEMAPETILON is now a permanent feature on America's entertainment landscape. Many US Indians cringe at the stereotypical image that the animated Apu projects. But Rohin Francis, writer for e-magazine, *Asians in Media*, contends, “Apu is a positive character for Asians—particularly those living outside India—the first regular South Asian character on a ‘prime time show’ outside the subcontinent. Not just Indians, but everyone is a stereotype in the Simpsons cartoon: Mexicans, Jews, dumb

cops, etc. But Apu is educated and hasn't sacrificed any of his cultural identity. A friend to all, he proudly displays a statue of Ganesh and is a strict vegan, and has become an integral cog in the imaginary small town in America's heartland.”



Apu reflects integration of Indian Hindus into US melting pot

A F R I C A

## Kenya Hindus Plant Trees

NORTHEAST AFRICA'S drought continues, and the Sahara desert is advancing. The looming famine and ecological disaster are largely blamed on human “error,” deforestation and cattle ranching. Some are fighting back by planting trees. Total Kenya Oil Company started the Total Eco Challenge in 2003 and has collaborated with 1,200 organizations to plant over 40 million trees in the past two years. The goal is to plant 100 million trees a year to restore cover to at least 10% of Kenya's national area. Kenya's Bharatiya



Planting for future rain, BSS volunteers plant trees in Kenya

Swayamsevak Sangh (BSS) recently pitched in to plant 1,000 trees at the Ndakaini Dam with the help of the Ndakaini Dam Environmental Conservation Association, which will watch over the plants for 18 months.





Left to right: Shelley Young, Megan Jacobsen, Brent Hansen (kneeling) and Christina Nijskens in the Peace Garden, CSU, Fresno

U S A

## Gandhi on Campus USA

WHILE THE WORLD NEWS IS focused on conflict, behind the scenes in our schools, universities, community organizations and dozens of nonprofit institutions, studies on peace and nonviolent conflict resolution are

focused on raising a new generation that knows there is a better way. The Peace and Justice Studies Association, a national group based at Evergreen State College, Olympia, Wash., reports, as of January, 2006, that 300 undergraduate and graduate programs are in place. In 1970 there was only one. Sam Diener, co-editor of Boston's *Peace Work Magazine*, published by the Quakers, says that Dennis Dalton's book *Ma-*

*hatma Gandhi, Nonviolent Power in Action* has become a required text in many courses. Shirley Armbruster, director of News Services, California State University, Fresno, explained, "The concept of the Peace Garden at Fresno State was born when a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi was dedicated on October 2, 1990. Gandhi was later joined by statues of Cesar E. Chavez and Martin Luther King. The Peace Garden sends a statement that seeking peaceful solutions to disputes, whether small scale or global, is an important and honorable undertaking."



Alison Slade, principal of Namaste Charter School, Chicago, provides fresh food, daily exercise and yoga

## EDUCATION

### Getting Kids To Eat Right

US SCHOOLS ARE STARTING to take the childhood obesity epidemic seriously. Some states and districts are banning junk food companies. In 2003, the Wisconsin's Appleton Area School district rejected a \$3-million dollar contract from Coca Cola to sell its products in on-campus vending machines. Schools are discovering that they can still keep much-needed revenues up by selling healthy products. Leafy greens, whole grains, flax-based energy drinks and healthful recipes devised by nutrition-smart chefs are fast replacing Doritos and Coke.

On another front, schools are increasing exercise—including yoga—for children at an age when pressure for academic scores and more screen time is keeping kids in their seats. Schools are making physical education mandatory again, as it was years ago, getting youths back to the recommended 60 minutes a day of moderate and vigorous activity. It's working. Well-fed, active children are getting better grades and experiencing fewer disciplinary problems.

## BRIEFLY...

### HINDU FESTIVALS ARE DECLINING

among the Adivasi tribal population of Gajapati district in south Orissa. The usual gala appearance of dancers on Makara Sankranti (January New Year festival) was absent this year. Many attribute the change to conversion to Christianity by 70 percent of the tribals of that area.

IN A MOVE TO GIVE PRIESTS AND scriptures a fair deal, the Tamil

Nadu Archakars (priests) Community Welfare Association met in January in Chennai to urge the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department to reallocate their share of temple donations. It also asked for retirement pensions, priority to dependents to fill vacancies and consultation with the experts on *Agama* (Hindu scriptures) before taking major decisions regarding worship or consecrations in the temple.

### A GENETIC STUDY BY SCIENTISTS

at the Central Forensic Science Laboratory in Calcutta has revealed that most present-day Indians are the descendants of early humans who began to arrive in India about 60,000 years ago. It suggests that modern Indians do not owe much genetic makeup to central Asians who arrived much later.

### ANOTHER STUDY ON THE IMPACT

of violent games supports researcher claims that such games contribute to aggressive, destructive behavior. Researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia have measured

reductions in healthy negative emotional responses to horrific scenes in players while "punishing" opponents in games. It is taken as an indication of desensitization to violence.

### CANADIAN AND INDIAN RESEARCHERS

report in a study published in the UK's *Lancet* medical journal that around 10 million female fetuses may have been aborted in India over the past two decades because of ultrasound sex screening and a traditional preference for boys which cuts across all of India's religions.



## HINDU RENAISSANCE TEAM

HINDUISM TODAY was founded January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish a resource for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, reports on events and encouraging others. to subscribe.

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## IN MY OPINION

### Assessing the Aryan Myth

The only defensible stance: "We don't know!"

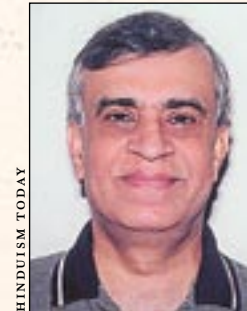
BY RAJIV MALHOTRA

THERE HAS BEEN MUCH heat generated on the topic of the migration or invasion of Aryans into India. A successful campaign to counter it must realize that the battle is long term, and is up against very heavily intellectually-armed opponents (see article on California textbooks on page 58). Hence, there must be a long-term study and discussion by serious scholars on our side, just as there has been within the other side for several decades. This is like cricket practice to make the home team stronger. In this spirit, I recommend the following three books to those wanting to understand the racist/Eurocentric origins of the Aryan theories in the West. Each of these books is from a credible author and academic publishing house, and not from anyone linked with politics of Hinduism or Indian nationalism. This is important. Yet, these books give hard facts to support our case, and each is the result of a decade of sweat and toil on the author's part.

The three books are as follows: *The Language of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, by Maurice Olender, Harvard University Press. 1992; *Aryabs and British India*, by Thomas R. Trautmann, University of California Press. 1997; *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate*, by Edwin Bryant, Oxford University Press. 2004.

It could also be a good strategy to gift this set to future state education boards, as attachments to our position paper, and to quote from these in a proper manner. This would raise the barrier to counterattacks, as it would not be a simple matter to assert guilt-by-association against alleged "Hindu nationalists." One should argue that this debate has serious contenders on both sides, and hence it is best left out of the classrooms of eleven-year-old Americans and their naive teachers.

Personally, I think it is wiser to refute the Aryan migration (yes, migration is just as harmful as invasion) theory without trying



HINDUISM TODAY

to replace it with an alternative out-of-India theory. That way you don't arm the opponents with an opportunity to attack. What matters is removing the prevailing Aryan theory, and in fact, explaining it as the result of 19th century European racism and nationalism that culminated in Nazism. For a theory to be refuted, it is not required that one must supply an alterna-

tive theory—an important point. So let's avoid over-ambition. It is okay to let it, at this stage, be moved to neutral territory, as something of a mystery for which further archeological research is required because current knowledge is simply inadequate. This is a sound agnostic position for an educator to take.

In short, my position is as follows:

1. The Aryan theory (invasion or migration) was invented by 19th century racist European intellectuals for political reasons.
2. It was never argued in proper intellectual fashion and was assumed to be true, with generation after generation adding more layers of white supremacist suppositions.
3. Archeological data, discovered in the 20th century, started to contradict this.
4. Many sound scholars, such as the authors of the above listed books, have come out to refute this old theory.
5. Many Indians came out to build alternative theories that are India/Hindu centric, and these have been attacked as counter chauvinism.
6. The hard data does not support either kind of chauvinism. The Aryan theory must not be taught as some kind of fact, while at the same time, no out-of-India alternative is ready to replace it. The gaps between textual evidence and archeological evidence have not been bridged at this stage. This is an intellectually sound and defensible position.

RAJIV MALHOTRA lives in Princeton, New Jersey. E-mail: [rm.infinity@gmail.com](mailto:rm.infinity@gmail.com).



# The World Is an Ashram

Life is demanding and you have no time for spiritual pursuits?  
Everyday happenings offer abundant opportunities to evolve.

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

**I**N HINDUISM WE ARE FORTUNATE to have many God-realized souls to guide us along the spiritual path. Their teachings are so profound and powerful that they penetrate our normal consciousness and give us new insights into how to live to maximize our spiritual progress.

Our paramaguru, Yogaswami, of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, gave us one such gem when he said, "The world is an ashram, a training ground for the achievement of moksha, liberation."

Yogaswami's statement has a parallel in William Shakespeare's play "As You Like It."

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.*

Here is a paraphrase of Shakespeare's lines, adapted to reflect Yogaswami's spiritual meaning:

*All the world's an ashram,  
And all the men and women are divine souls;  
They are spiritually maturing through earthly experiences,  
And one soul in its time takes many births,  
And thus evolves into oneness with God.*

Let's look more closely at what it means to say that all the world's an ashram. An ashram, of course, is the residence and teaching center of a swami or spiritual preceptor. It is a place we go to learn about our religion and make spiritual progress. When we go out the door of our home to go to work, school or elsewhere, do we have in mind that we are going to an ashram, that our actions during the day in the office, factory, hospital, classroom or elsewhere will help us evolve spiritually and bring us closer to moksha? Probably not. When we come home and reflect back on the day, do we feel we made spiritual progress while out of the home? Probably not. Why is this? It is because we have not been trained to look at life in this way. We think of the ashram as a place of spiritual advancement, and we regard the world as a place of mundane tasks and distractions from our spiritual work. The common idea is that what we do in the ashram, the home shrine or the temple is what brings us spiritual progress, and what we do at the office or in the classroom has nothing to do with our spiritual life.

This common perspective is not the viewpoint of great souls such as Yogaswami. Such souls know that much spiritual



progress can be made during our time in the world if we hold the right perspective. I call this approach "spiritualizing daily life." Let's bring this concept down to Earth by dividing the occasions for spiritual progress when out in the world into two categories: facing life's challenges and finding opportunities to serve.

First, let's look at facing life's challenges. Life is going to come to you whether you want it to or not. Joyful, easy times, difficult times, happy days and sad—it is all coming. It is all there, in your karma. It can't help but come. So you don't have to go looking for it. You don't have to go try and do something different. You can't avoid it. You can't hide from it.

Life's challenges will come to us. What is going to happen is going to happen. But where the focus should be, for those on the spiritual path, is on how we respond to these challenges. Why? Because that is where we have a choice. For example, a small infant keeps us awake all night by crying. How do we respond to it? Does it upset us? Do we complain? Or, do we just accept it and respond back with lots of love? In every experience of life we have control over our response. It can be impulsive or thoughtful. It's our choice.

When accused of something that we didn't do, how do we respond? When we face challenges at work—say our boss is unfair with us, yells at us—what is our reaction? We want to yell back, but cannot. So, do we go home and yell at the spouse? In all such cases, we have choices. It is not the challenges that come, but how we face those challenges that makes the difference. We can react emotionally without thinking about spiritual principles. We can get angry or despondent. We can worry a lot and become irritable.

Or we can decide to control any emotional reactions that we might have. We can choose to live without anger. We can choose to cultivate patience. We can choose to be kinder to other people, to be more generous. That is what makes us spiritually stronger. As we curb our instinctive nature, our soul nature shines forth.

In other words, if we get angry now and then, let us try and eliminate anger altogether. If we get impatient with people who seem to explain things at great lengths when they could be explained in a short way, let's learn how not to get impatient. Let us learn how to accept that verbosity is their nature.

Here is the list of six common challenges we face in life that provide us with good opportunities for spiritual progress if we respond in a wise manner with self-control.

**First Challenge: Mistreatment by Others.** Life provides us a steady stream of experiences in which we are mistreated by others. Rather than retaliate or hold resentment, we can forgive and respond with kindness.

**Second Challenge: Our Own Mistakes.** When we make a major error, we have a choice to wallow in self-doubt and self-depreca-



DINODIA

**Opportunities are everywhere:** Left: Finding ways to help others in our daily life, however simple the gesture, brings us spiritual rewards. Right: Our daily work, whatever it may be, brings opportunities to learn patience, cooperation, poise and a genuine appreciation for others who share our life and career.



tion or to figure out how to not repeat the mistake.

**Third Challenge: Difficult Projects.** When faced with tasks that stretch our abilities, we can do the minimal just to get by or be inspired to do our best by looking at them as opportunities to improve our concentration, willpower and steadfastness, all of which will enhance our meditation abilities and inner striving.

**Fourth Challenge: Disturbed Emotions.** When we get upset by life's experiences, we have a choice to suffer the emotional upheaval or to strive to pull ourselves out of it as quickly as possible.

**Fifth Challenge: Interpersonal Conflicts.** When serious disagreements, quarrels or arguments occur, we have a choice to hold a grudge and perhaps even shun the person or to resolve the matter and keep the relationship harmonious.

**Sixth Challenge: Gossip and Backbiting.** When those around us indulge in gossip, rumors, backbiting and intrigue, we have a choice to join in or to not participate and even, among those close to us, make it clear that we do not approve.

The second category of occasions for spiritual progress when out in the world is what I call finding opportunities to serve. Here is an introduction to this concept from Gurudeva's *Living with Siva* which beautifully illustrates the idea of spiritualizing daily life through service.

"Go out into the world this week and let your light shine through your kind thoughts, but let each thought manifest itself in a physical deed of doing something for someone else. Lift their burdens just a little bit and, unknowingly perhaps, you may lift something that is burdening your mind. You erase and wipe clean the mirror of your own mind through helping another. We call this karma yoga, the deep practice of unwinding, through service, the selfish, self-centered, egotistical vasanas [subconscious inclinations] of the lower nature that have been generated for many, many lives and which bind the soul in darkness.

Through service and kindness, you can unwind the subconscious mind and gain a clear understanding of all laws of life. Your soul will shine forth. You will be that peace. You will radiate that inner happiness and be truly secure, simply by practicing being kind in thought, word and deed."

There are many opportunities to help others at home, work,

school, in the neighborhood and community. We have developed a list of six simple practices. Let me briefly introduce them.

**First Opportunity: Seeing God in Those We Greet.** When greeting someone, we strive to look deeply enough into them to see God, to see them as a divine being evolving through experience into oneness with God. Our attitude is then naturally helpful and benevolent.

**Second Opportunity: Volunteering.** There are many opportunities each day to step forward and offer to help in ways that are beyond what is required of us. An attitude of humble service diminishes the ego and strengthens our spiritual identity. One important spiritual attitude to hold is to be willing to help when called upon, to not resist or refuse, to be as open to helping others as you are in doing things for yourself.

**Third Opportunity: Expressing Appreciation.** We can uplift and encourage others by sincerely expressing how grateful we are for their help, friendship and importance in our life.

**Fourth Opportunity: Helping Newcomers.** In our modern world, people move around a great deal. Thus there is a steady flow of newcomers at work, at school, in our neighborhood and at our temple. Stepping forward to welcome and help orient them to their new environment is an excellent way to be of service.

**Fifth Opportunity: Offering Hospitality.** Everyone can find creative ways to be hospitable in the home, at school and even at work.

**Sixth Opportunity: Making Encouraging and Complimentary Remarks.** Make a point to say something encouraging and complimentary to everyone you meet. Their day will be brighter because of it, and so will yours.

In conclusion, having a great day needs to mean more than getting a bonus at work or an A on a school test. It should include the spiritual progress you made that day through effectively facing life's challenges and the ways in which you helped and uplifted others. Our list of twelve practices is a good beginning, but hopefully you will keep expanding it as additional insights come from your striving to maximize the spiritual progress you can make from the experiences and opportunities each day brings. Also, parents can teach children to consciously strive for spiritual progress each day at school by facing life's challenges and finding opportunities to serve.



## LETTERS

### Jai Tirupati!

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE WELL-written and moving article on Tirumala temple. Reading it brought back many feelings of my family's own pilgrimage there four years ago. We had originally visited to pray for a baby. As I looked into His calm face and all became still, I sensed the world turning, the universe forming and falling away, deaths, births, catastrophes and blessings. And through it all He was there, face calm, smiling slightly in His magnificence. As I left the sanctum, I found to my surprise that I had tears of joy running down my face. Two years later, we carried our first-born child up the seven hills to the temple to present to Him. She had her first head-shaving, as her father, grandparents and past generations did before her. A word of advice for non-Indian pilgrims: It is best to dress as traditionally as possible and be accompanied by a local devotee. Because of my light skin, I was pulled aside and asked to sign a statement that I was indeed a Hindu before being allowed to continue on.

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### Why Hindus Are the Happiest

A RECENT STUDY CONCLUDES THAT HINDUS are one of the happiest groups of people on Earth. George Harrison once said, as reported in HINDUISM TODAY, "Through Hinduism, I feel a better person. I just got happier and happier." There are many reasons why Hindus are so contented, but I'll point out some of the reasons I believe are important: Hindus believe in reincarnation and karma, which means every human being is at a different level of consciousness, so they have different spiritual needs. Hinduism provides this, as it gives complete freedom of thought and belief. There are some Hindus who are happy doing pujas while others are happy doing *yajnas* and still others are happy just meditating. There are some who like to go on pilgrimages, while others prefer not to go to temples. Some like to read spiritual books, and some believe God has no form. Some Hindus enjoy going to temples or *satsangs* while others like to follow and worship a guru. People of different levels of consciousness are all happy doing their thing. This diversity of spirituality does not exist in religions like Islam and Christianity, which have only one God with one name, one book and only one way to worship, on the same day. Hindus not only have many spiritual books, but there are some still being written. Hindus are also happy because they respect and love people of all religions and believe in nonviolence. Hindus not only worship *murtis* (idols) but they can worship

man as God as well. This variety of spirituality makes man very happy and contented.

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### Vedanta in Brazil

IN 1996 WHEN I RETURNED FROM LONDON to Brazil I started to practice hatha yoga. I spent six years in London, where I could have had many more encounters with Hindu culture, philosophy and history. But, no, it was in Rio de Janeiro, in a very populated neighborhood, that I first met yoga. First it was only hatha yoga, but soon enough I started to feel some changes within me. I started to feel happier inside, lighter. It was subtle, and I could not understand it. In 1999 I heard about a Vedanta school called Vidya Mandir in the heart of Copacabana, a very busy, famous place in Rio. I started to study there with Gloria Arieira, the founder and director. She studied with her guru, Swami Dayananda, from 1974 to 1978, staying at his ashram in Mumbai. Since I started to study at Vidya Mandir, it all began to make sense for me. Vedanta has changed my life slowly and gradually into a new perspective. I feel in my heart and in my mind this knowledge sinking in, and I have begun to see life and why things are the way they are with less resistance, more compassion, understanding that there is an order and a reason for everything. I got answers I couldn't find anywhere else. I even stopped seeing my psychologist. Now I see that "the whole universe is one great family." I have subscribed to HINDUISM TODAY, and I can tell you that if I have a religion, I would say I feel very close to Hinduism.

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### Yoga Renamed Is Still Hindu

I THINK THAT HINDUS HAVE CONTRIBUTED to the development of the "Christian Yoga" concept, albeit indirectly ("Yoga Renamed Is Still Hindu," Jan/Feb/Mar 2006). I wonder how many yoga classes and schools run by Hindus display the Indian flag and emphasize the use of Sanskrit terminology. How much Hindu culture is promoted in these classes? I would like to cite the example of Tae Kwon Do, the Korean martial art. The Tae Kwon Do school in my area, which is run by Koreans, displays the Korean flag along with the US flag, to which students bow before entering the classroom. Students, even children, are required to learn Korean words. I feel that in our quest to make yoga more palatable to the Western taste we have neglected its religious and cultural roots ourselves. What then can we expect from

a non-Hindu yoga teacher teaching yoga to fellow non-Hindus?

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### Nonvegetarian Airline Meals

My wife and I traveled from London to New York on American Airlines. Prior to the flight I called and asked for "a Hindu meal that is strict vegetarian and contains no meat or fish" to ensure not even fish, which some classify as vegetarian, would be in the meal. I was told that a "Hindu Vegetarian Meal" had been booked. On the flight we were presented with a meal containing meat. The stewards were unable to do anything and suggested we take up the matter with their customer service department, and we did so upon returning home. In a letter from them, they claimed "Hindu meals are not vegetarian." A couple of months after two follow-ups, still not accepting fault, they clarified, "Hindu meals were not always vegetarian" and explained further, "While some Hindus are strict vegetarians, there are some who will eat some meats, apart from pork and beef. Whilst I certainly regret that you were unhappy with being served chicken in your meal, there was a period of time where halal chicken was served in the Hindu meals." They offered air miles or flight vouchers in compensation. But to us, such statements were insulting to our religion. We declined the offer. Clearly, big international airlines have a conflicting perception of Hindus. More so, they seem to change the contents of the meals, most likely according to availability. Would they do the same on Kosher and Halal meals? If they clearly can make such statements about Hindu meals, I am sure they do so with others, too. I hope to bring awareness of this to fellow Hindus. We must stop large airlines from making such irresponsible statements and making changes to meals as and when they like, misleading customers.

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### Non-Hindus Entering Temples

I AM RATHER PERTURBED AT THE REACTION of the priests when a non-Hindu entered their temple ("Thai Princess Denied Entry to Puri Temple," Hindu Press International, Nov. 22, 2005). I was born and bred in a country that was ruled by apartheid and practiced this very principle, except that it was done on the basis of race. This is not acceptable. Furthermore, India supported South Africa greatly in our struggle against oppression. Mahatma Gandhi made his point very clear, and the incident of his

being thrown off the train in our capital of Pietermaritzburg is used to teach our children that it is wrong to discriminate on the basis of color or creed. Is India moving backward or forward?

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### Wardrobe of the Gods

I FIND YOUR WEB SITE ON HINDUISM VERY helpful and informative about the vast diversity of Hindu culture, and I have gained so much knowledge from it. Just today as I was reading one of the articles, a thought came to mind about how well the Lords are dressed. We don't see people dressing like that today. Where and when did this style of dress come from, and how come we stopped dressing like we dress the Gods? I have seen many gurus and sadhus, but their dress code doesn't match that of the Gods. How beautiful they are and how sad it is that all of this has not been passed down to the current generation.

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✓ *When invoking and worshiping a God in a temple or shrine, the intent is to treat Him as one would treat a great king who has come to visit. In ancient times, Indian kings dressed in the elaborate, colorful, highly decorated manner that is still used when dressing Hindu temple Deities today.*

### Crooked Catholic Chicanery

Your recent piece on the Catholic Church's deceptive activities ("Catholic Church Expands Deceptive Program of 'Indianization,'" Hindu Press International, Oct. 30, 2005) is very interesting. I am Canadian of British background, as well as a teacher and writer on yoga. My heart is in the *Upanishads* and the life and teachings of Ramana Maharshi. I consider Gandhi to be the greatest modern example of karma yoga in its highest expression. The Catholic Church is doing the same nonsense in India which it has done to the native peoples of Canada since the fifteenth century. Reading about Christian-run schools in India reminds me of a horrifying period in Canadian Native history. Canada's infamous residential schools (sixty percent of which were run by the Catholic Church) indoctrinated aboriginal children with Catholic dogma, forbade them to speak their native tongues, disparaged their cultural values and made every effort to assimilate them into white society. These wonderful indigenous peoples have been demoralized, and their cultural and spiritual traditions completely undermined by the pernicious influence of this chauvinistic institution. It is simply enslavement done in the name of Jesus. *Hidden From History*, by Kevin Annett, gives a full account of the devastation caused to the aboriginal peoples of Canada. Does this sound familiar? It should, because this is essentially what the Catholic Church, their phony sadhus and other evangelical churches are doing in India today. Hindus, take note! Furthermore,

the Government of India must take a strong stand against efforts to convert Hindus, especially among those who are weak and vulnerable. Respecting religious freedom does not mean tolerating aggressive proselytizing. If anything, proselytizing is itself a violation of human rights and should be stopped whenever and wherever it raises its ugly head. Hindus must all become little Gandhis when it comes to protecting the Sanatana Dharma, i.e. nonviolent warriors. As a devotee of the Sanatana Dharma myself, I often repeat a prayer that was spoken by the modern sage, Ramana Maharshi: "O Vinayaka, who wrote on a scroll the words of the great sage Vyasa and who presides at the victorious Arunachala, do remove the disease of ignorance which is the cause of repeated births and protect, graciously, the great and noble Upanishadic faith, which brims with the honey of the Self."

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## Our Digital Edition Is Launched!

### How to help us realize exciting new possibilities

THIS ISSUE IS OUR FIRST TO OFFER A digital duplicate, downloadable from the web at no charge. HINDUISM TODAY thus becomes available to countless new readers. Even more significantly, the digital edition opens up vast new worlds of information and enjoyment. Here are two examples: 1) on page 23 the caption for the musical fountains of Akshardham invites you to go to the digital edition, click on the photo, and see a 15-minute movie of Akshardham (instructions are in "Digital Dharma," back cover), and 2) on page I-5, in the article teaching a simple home puja, click on the blue URL in the digital edition and hear it chanted in Sanskrit—then use that link to learn how to properly chant the puja! The possibilities for "rich media" are endless. Read about a guru, then hear him

speak; read about a dance troupe, then watch them perform; find an interesting concept and click to learn more.

Our publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, envisions a near future where the family TV, computer and multimedia system merge as a one "entertainment center." Everyone sits together "surfing" HINDUISM TODAY on a large screen, enjoying text, voices, images, artists, leaders, bringing Hinduism's treasures into vibrant life—a boon for busy people, families and, especially, youth! In years and decades to come, we will need the financial means to remain at the forefront of this fast-moving field and bring readers the very best, always. You can be a part of this exciting endeavor. The Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of the Hindu Heritage Endow-



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## QUOTES & QUIPS

To say that there is no God is like saying  
“I have no tongue” with your own tongue.

**Mata Amritanandamayi Ma**, India's Kerala-based hugging saint

Upon attaining enlightenment, a sage who lived in austere simplicity was asked by the devas what he would like as a boon. “Nothing,” he replied, “I aspire for nothing at all.” But the devas would not accept the refusal. They insisted that he choose something. The solitaire, however, was unyielding. “What can I ask for? I have no desire. I have everything I sought.” But after much angelic insistence, he relented. “Grant me whatever you feel like,” he said. With the ball firmly in their court, the divine agents pronounced, “Whomsoever you touch will be cured. The dead will regain life, and wilted plants will bloom forth in full health wherever you walk.” “All right,” the solitaire said, “if you are so generous, be a little kind. Let all that happen with the touch of my shadow instead. I should not be aware

of the good I do, lest it make me proud, turning this boon into a curse.”

Only when we remain equipoised in praises and persecutions shall we be able to fulfill our objectives. **His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj**, spiritual head of *Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha*

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us. **Helen Keller** (1880-1968), famous deaf, blind and mute author, lecturer and poet

Go to God. Whatever name, whatever form you worship is no problem. Just go to

Him. He accepts all names and all forms. If God can be worshiped in only one way then He is not God! **Swami Chidanand Saraswati (Muniji)**, president of *Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh*

A zealous Christian who was trying to convert a Hindu found himself getting nowhere. “The thing is,” argued the frustrated Christian, “you have to be born again!” “But I have been born again!” insisted the Hindu. “And again and again and again...”

War doesn't determine who's right. War determines who's left! **Swami Anubhavananda**, humorous author and lecturer

The mind alone is man's cause of bondage or release: it leads to bondage when attached to the sense objects, and to release when freed from them. **Krishna Yajur Veda, Maitri Upanishad**

God is with us. It is He only who gives us the strength to work. If we live with this inspiration in our heart, we will surely experience Divinity in our life. Our work will become our devotion, and means of our spiritual progress. **Rameshbhai Oza**, inspired performer of *Vaishnava* kathas

The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it. **Chinese proverb**

Four types of people quickly perish: the shy courtesan, the immodest housewife, the contented kshatriya, and the discontented brahmin. **Chanakya Shloka**

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle. **Albert Einstein** (1879-1955)



### Impermanence Of All Things

**Tirukural 332:** Amassing great wealth is gradual, like the gathering of a theater crowd. Its dispersal is sudden, like that same crowd departing.

**Tirukural 333:** Wealth's nature is to be unending. Upon acquiring it, quickly do that which is enduring.

**Tirukural 337:** Men do not know if they will live another moment, yet their thoughts are ten million and more.

**Tirukural 338:** The soul's attachment to the body is like that of a fledgling, which forsakes its empty shell and flies away.

## Frank and Ernest

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Well, I tell you, if I have been wrong in my agnosticism, when I die I'll walk up to God in a manly way and say, “Sir, I made an honest mistake.” **H. L. Mencken** (1880-1956), *American journalist, satirist and critic*

Actions are the louder expression of thought. The quality of thought is ordered by the nature of our inner belief and faith. **Swami Chinmayananda** (1916-1993), founder of *Chinmaya Mission*

Writing about popular hatha yoga as practiced in country clubs and gyms: Yoga's good. It gets you lithe and firm without looking like you're on parole. And it has

a touch of spirituality without the inconvenience or embarrassment of having to believe in anything. But it's like playing bridge—everybody who does it has been at it for years. It's difficult to just jump in, and in modern gym terms it has one fundamental flaw: you can't fake it. And gyms are all about cheating. Cheating age, cheating death. But you can't pretend to be standing on your head. **A. A. Gill**, London Sunday Times columnist

India is the oldest civilization, the largest democracy and the youngest population. Almost 70 percent are below age 35 and almost 50 percent are 25 and under.

When the fundamentalists of any religion teach an unrelenting duality based on good and evil, man and nature or God and Devil, this creates friends and enemies. This belief is a sacrilege to Hindus, because they know that the attitudes which are the by-product are totally dualistic, and for good to triumph over that which is alien or evil, it must kill out that which is considered to be evil. The Hindu looks at nothing as intrinsically evil. To him the ground is sacred. The sky is sacred. The sun is sacred. His wife is a Goddess. Her husband is a God. Their children are devas. Their home is a shrine. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), founder of *HINDUISM TODAY*

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Many Religions Use Prayer Beads

**T**HEY WERE ONE OF THE first sources of human artistic expression, emotional comfort and spiritual mystery. Carved from sea-shells, wood, precious stone or other materials, beads were cherished by stone-age societies as talismans of good fortune. Tens of thousands of years later, beads are still found in many major religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity.

The earliest recorded use of prayer beads comes from

the Hindu faiths in India as far back as the eighth century BCE. Called *mala*, the beads are still used in prayer in India. Those who worship Siva use the rough, brown seeds of the *rudraksha* tree. Hindus who worship Vishnu make their beads from the wood of the *tulsi*, or “holy basil tree.”

As Buddhism spread in India, around 500 BCE, the tradition of using strings of beads to keep count of prayers followed. Buddhist monks carry strands of 108 beads

while lay persons carry smaller strands of 30 to 40. Among Tibetan monks, the most cherished of such beads are made from the bones of revered deceased lamas. The use of prayer beads spread to China, Tibet and eventually Japan.

It is believed that Muslim traders brought prayer beads west, eventually adopting them into Islamic tradition. The *subha* consists of 33 beads with usually two leader beads. Because Islam grew alongside Christianity in the



THOMAS KELLY

Middle East, the tradition was eventually taken up by Christians as well. Among the Greek Orthodox faithful, the use of the *komboskini*, or knotted rope, is common, and Catholics use a string of beads called the rosary.

*Excerpted from an article by Geoffrey Fattah in the Deseret Morning News*



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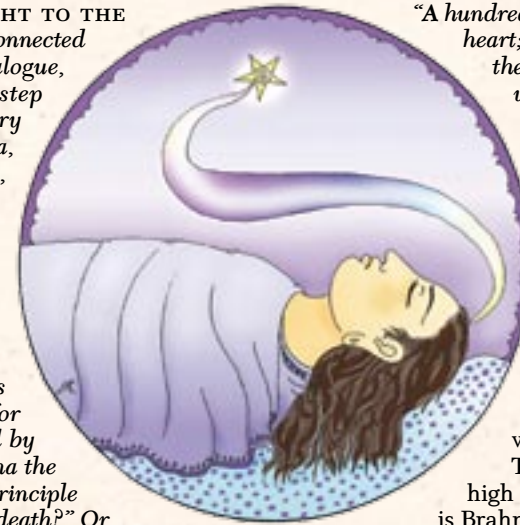
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FROM THE VEDAS

# The Grand Departure

Lord Yama, the Immortal Man, unveils the mysteries of the afterlife

**T**HE UPANISHADS TAKE US STRAIGHT TO THE heart of the metaphysical problem connected with death. By means of lively dialogue, the Katha Upanishad brings us step by step to the disclosure of the mystery of death. The dialogue is between Yama, Lord of Death and a young brahmin, Naciketas by name. The parable of Naciketas belongs to an already highly developed stage in human consciousness. It combines the symbolism of Yama with elements of the earlier story of the Taittiriya Brahmana, thus weaving together in one artistic fabric the different threads of the Vedic tradition. Naciketas represents Man at his noblest, longing for enlightenment and realization, haunted by the problem of death. He asks Lord Yama the crucial question: "Does Man—the life principle in a Man—continue to exist or not after death?" Or, more tersely and more vividly: "Is he or is he not?"



"A hundred and one are the channels of the heart; one of them leads to the crown of the head. By this channel, proceeding upward, one goes to immortality."

arrives, O Gautama. Some go into a womb to receive once again a body; others enter inert things, according to their works and knowledge. This is "that"—thus they recognize the supreme ineffable happiness. How will I then discern "it"? Does it shine or does it reflect light? There the sun does not shine, or moon or stars, lightnings do not shine there, much less this fire. All things shine as reflections of his shining and this whole world is bright with his light.

This everlasting fig tree, whose roots are on high and whose branches are below, is the Pure, is Brahman, what is called the Immortal. In that all worlds are established and nothing passes beyond.

This, in truth, is that! This whole world—whatever exists—both springs from that and moves by His breath. Herein is great fear as in a brandished thunderbolt. Those who know that become immortal.

From fear of that burns the Fire, from fear of that blazes the Sun, from fear of that both Indra and Vayu and Death, to name a fifth, speed on their ways. Once freed of all desires that lie in the heart, then a mortal man becomes immortal. Even in this life he attains to Brahman. Once all the knots of the heart are cut, then a mortal man becomes immortal. This is the end of the instruction.

A hundred and one are the channels of the heart; one of them leads to the crown of the head. By this channel, proceeding upward, one goes to immortality. The Person of a thumb's size, the *atman* within, ever dwells in the heart of beings. One should draw him out of one's body with care just as an inner stem is drawn from its sheath. Him you should know, the Pure, the Immortal; Him you should know, the Pure, the Immortal.

Then Naciketas, instructed by Death, having embraced this knowledge and the whole yoga discipline, passed over to Brahman and became free from stain and exempt from death; and so, too, is he who possesses this knowledge of the Self within him.

KATHA UPANISHAD I.20-21, 29; II.12-14, 18, 20; III.10-11, 1-15; V.6-7, 14-15; IV.1-3, 14-18

TRANSLATION BY RAIMUNDO PANIKKAR

RAIMUNDO PANIKKAR, 83, holds doctorates in science, philosophy and theology. His anthology, *The Vedic Experience*, excerpted above, is the result of ten years in Banaras translating with the help of Vedic scholars.

The *Vedas* are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, *shruti*, of Hinduism, likened to the *Torah* (1,200 BCE), *Bible New Testament* (100 CE), *Koran* (630 CE) or *Zend Avesta* (600 BCE). Four in number, *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*, the *Vedas* include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 BCE.

**Naciketas:** The doubt that exists about a man when he is dead—for some say "he is" and others, "he is not"—about that I would clearly know, instructed by you. This is my third and final favor.

**Yama:** The hard-to-perceive and wrapped in mystery, set in the cave and hidden in the depth—he who, wise indeed, realizes this as God, by means of an awareness centered on the Self, leaves far behind both joy and sorrow. The man who has understood and grasped this well, who, stripping off all else, has plumbed this mystery, will rejoice, having obtained what merits rejoicing. For you, I think, the house is wide open, Naciketas!

**Naciketas:** Declare to me then what you deem to be beyond what is righteous and what is unrighteous, beyond what is done and what is undone, beyond what was and what shall be.

**Yama:** The Inspired Self is not born nor does he die; he springs from nothing and becomes nothing. Unborn, permanent, unchanging, primordial, he is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. Smaller than the small, greater than the great, the *atman* is hidden in the core of every creature. One free from desire and thus free from grief sees the greatness of the *atman* by grace of the Ordainer.

Beyond the senses are their objects, beyond the objects is the mind, beyond the mind is the intellect, beyond the intellect is the great *atman*. Beyond the Great is the Unmanifest, beyond the Unmanifest is the Person, beyond the Person there is nothing: it is the end, the highest state.

Arise! Awake! Seek to understand the favors you have won. The sharpened edge of a razor is hard to cross—thus the sages declare the intricacies of the path. When one has realized that which is soundless, intangible, formless, unchanging, tasteless, odorless, unwavering, beginningless and endless, that which is infinite and perfectly stable, then one is freed from the jaws of death.

Now I will teach you concerning this mysterious everlasting Brahman and also what becomes of the *atman* when death



# Pride of India

**Swaminarayan Akshardham opens in New Delhi with praise from India's religious, cultural and political leaders**

**I**N 1968 SRI YOGIJI MAHARAJ TOLD his devotees that he saw a grand temple to Lord Swaminarayan built alongside the sacred Yamuna River where it passes through Delhi, the capital of India. In 2005, his successor, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (below with Yogiji Maharaj) fulfilled that vision with the dedication of Akshardham Delhi. The spectacular religious complex ranks as one of the greatest Hindu monuments of all time.



ALL PHOTOS: BAPS



**Heaven on Earth:** Akshardham Delhi's main monument of pink sandstone outside and white marble inside is 141 feet high, 316 feet wide and 356 feet long





BY RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI

ON NOVEMBER 6, AT 6:15 PM, HIS DIVINE Holiness, Pramukhswami Maharaj—in the presence of the President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam; the Prime Minister of India, Shri Manmohan Singh; the Leader of Opposition in the Indian Parliament, Shri L. K. Advani; and 25,000 guests—opened Swaminarayan Akshardham Delhi. At the center of this immense hundred-acre religious and cultural complex is a 141-foot-tall, 110,000-square-foot, nine-domed monument enshrining an 11-foot gold-plated murti of Lord Swaminarayan. As President Kalam entered it for the first time, he clasped the hand of the sadhu guiding him and said, “Today I feel proud being the first citizen of India.” Indeed, the complex inspires awe even from a distance, and will surely leave every Indian visitor with that same sense of pride Dr. Kalam felt. The monument is one of the most extraordinary architectural creations of the last thousand years, in India and anywhere else. Already it is Delhi’s prime tourist attraction, with tens of thousands visiting daily, and it will likely come to be regarded as a wonder of the modern world.

The simultaneous presence of India’s three top political leaders—a Muslim, a Sikh and a Hindu—was a sign of the country’s high regard for this new creation. Each lavishly praised the project. In his speech, Dr. Kalam said, “Akshardham creatively blends the traditional stone art and architecture, Indian culture and civilization, ancient values and wisdom and the best of modern media and technology. Multiple layers of this complex express the strength of the mind,

willpower of the human being, indomitable spirit, flowering kindness, fusion of scientific and medical talent, myriad colors of varied cultures and, ultimately, the power of knowledge.” Prime Minister Singh hopes the inauguration of the temple would mark a beginning of a new era in religious tolerance and “spread the message of peace and communal harmony throughout the world.” Shri L.K. Advani declared Akshardham “the most unique monument of the world.”

Sri Pramukh Swami in his speech modestly redirected their praise. He offered, “We have a tradition of humility and humbleness. We are the servants of even those who are the servants of the God. Our purpose in building this monument was to fulfill the dream of my guru, Shri Yogiji Maharaj. It has taken 35 years to translate his dream into reality.” “The message of Lord Swaminarayan,” Pramukh Swami went on, “was to work for the welfare of the whole of humanity. Lord Swaminarayan said that only through love and bhakti can we change the hearts of the people. He did not just say this, but he put this philosophy in practice and transformed the lives of all those who came in touch with him. He freed them from the clutches of vices such as drinking, smoking and meat eating.” Pramukh Swami expressed the hope that all those who visit would also have their lives transformed by understanding the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Cultural Complex occupies 105 acres on the banks of holy river Yamuna in the heart of India’s capital, New Delhi. The US\$44 million proj-

ect was built in just five years with the help and support of 11,000 craftsmen and volunteers of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminyan Sanstha (BAPS) who devoted millions of man hours to complete the project. BAPS, one of Hinduism’s foremost organizations, traces its roots to the life and teachings of Lord Swaminarayan (1781–1830), a great saint of the Vaishnava tradition who lived in Gujarat.

Brahmavihariswami, one of the team of eight sadhus who oversaw the project, explained, “The idea is not to have people come here just to learn about Lord Swaminarayan. The idea is that they deepen their attachment to India, and thereby we elevate the consciousness of our country. The greatest need in India today is to make Indians proud to be an Indian,



Brahmavihariswami

**Pramukhswami, his sadhus, engineers and volunteers discuss the plans for Akshardham in 2000. Swamiji was intimately involved in every aspect of the project. He provided key suggestions that transformed the original design, which had a kind of “royal palace” feel about it, to a wholly spiritual edifice.**



PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ OVERSEES EVERY DETAIL

## INTERVIEW

# How Yogiji Maharaj’s Dream Was Fulfilled

*Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami is one of the eight most senior swamis of the BAPS order. He is a direct disciple of Yogiji Maharaj, the preceding guru of BAPS. He was deputed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the present guru, to oversee the Akshardham project in Delhi as head of a team of eight sadhus. Following are excerpts from his interview with HINDUISM TODAY’S Rajiv Malik.*

THE WHOLE PROJECT IN THE SHAPE WE ARE SEEING IT today was the dream of Yogiji Maharaj. He strongly desired that an Akshardham should be built up in Delhi on the banks of river Yamuna. When Yogiji Maharaj expressed this desire in 1968, we just had two or three devotee families in New Delhi. Swamiji used to tell these devotees repeatedly when they came to see him in Gujarat to do something about the proposed Delhi temple. He used to say that even the holy river Yamuna had become very impatient that a temple should come up on its

banks. All this was happening in the year 1968, three years before Yogiji Maharaj left his physical body. The devotees tried their best, but there was little progress.

More than a decade later, in 1982, his successor Pramukh Swami Maharaj asked the devotees to explore the possibilities of constructing a temple in Delhi. A request for allotting land for this project was filed with Delhi Development Authority [DDA]. Other areas in and around Delhi and nearby Ghaziabad, Gurgaon and Faridabad were also explored. But Yogiji Maharaj had already given the address for the project, and that was the banks of river Yamuna. Pramukh Swamiji said we had to fulfill his



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intention. Eighteen years later, in April, 2000, 60 acres of land was allotted to us by the DDA and 30 acres, the front portion, by the Uttar Pradesh Government.

In 1997-98 we had requested Pramukh Swamiji to start the time-consuming stone carving work even before acquiring the land. But Pramukh Swamiji said the work would begin once the place was finalized. Later on, we realized that if we had begun the work beforehand, we would not have finally created something which is so marvelous and huge. We could not have given so much attention to the details as we did.

Finally, when we got the land, Pramukh Swamiji came and performed a puja here for the success of the project. He said that the land was even better than the site dreamt by Yogiji Maharaj and that all our line of gurus, Yogiji and even Lord Swaminarayan will be all very happy with the unique project that will come up. We inaugurated the work here on November 8, 2000 and Akshardham was launched on November 6, 2005. So the project was completed in precisely two days less than five years.

Right from the drawing stage we consulted Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj. First, we developed a model of Akshardham. Swamiji was consulted on each aspect, including the monument, the concept and theme of exhibitions, the theatre building, pond and plaza. All of us agreed to what he said and desired. If he did not like something, then it was dropped.

Our sadhus worked very hard on this project. They supervised the finer carving work on the Deities, based on their research on

India craftsmanship from the 8th to 12 century. They even went to Cambodia and visited the ancient temples of Angkor Wat. They visited Jodhpur, Jagannath Puri, Konark and temples in South India. Two of our saints, Shriti Swami and Parampurush Swami, are scholars of the *Pancharatra Shastra* which lays down many of the architectural rules of temples and the carving of Deities, such as the twenty-four forms of Vasudeva. Like this, we worked together with our guru, our fellow sadhus and the many devotees. We believe that this project was completed only due to Pramukh Swami’s inspiration and guidance and the blessings of the saints of our lineage.

This project has come up only due to immeasurable devotion of Pramukh Swamiji for his guru, Shri Yogiji Maharaj. Pramukh Swamiji says that behind the construction of the Delhi temple are prayers done by devotees of Lord Swaminarayan spread all over the world. The BAPS organization has around one million devotees all over the world. Half of these devotees undertook special fasts, japa (mantra recitation), *pradakshina* (circumambulation of the temple) *dandavats* (repeated prostrations) and other forms of penance, as well, for the success of this project. Pramukh Swamiji says that the monument is a symbol of the devotion of these hundreds of thousands of devotees. The completion of this project could not be accomplished just by the power of human intellect and physical skill. This project could only be completed through the blessings and inspiration of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. No doubt the craftsmen and others worked in an efficient manner. But still we have felt that it has all happened on its own due to the blessings of God.





proud to belong to a great culture. That is what will change everything.” “The project has already had a positive impact,” he said. “It projects the right image of Hinduism, as beautiful, mild, gentle, all accepting. Pramukh Swami himself had stated, “This temple has not been constructed to show our strength or to be number one. It has been done because it is natural and spontaneous, and God has given us the guidance.”

For three weeks prior to the opening, thousands of BAPS devotees and spiritual, political and business leaders visited the site. They included leading saints of India, such as Sri Satyamitranand Giriji of Bharat Mata Mandir of Haridwar, Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami of Adichunchunagiri Mutt in Karnataka, Swami Chidananda Saraswati (Muniji) of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh and Sri Rameshbhai Oza, to name just a few. Satish Gujral, one of India’s foremost architects, observed after his visit, “I have seen great monuments, and I am speechless. Every pillar, every canopy is a masterpiece and made with incomparable craftsmanship. Normally, it would have taken 50 years to build such a thing. It is a very beautiful place, very well planned, and can make a non-believer become a believer.”

On November 3, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of HINDUISM TODAY, was chief guest for the last of this series of pre-dedication events. After touring the monument, he addressed the evening gathering of 25,000 international BAPS devotees. Bodhinatha spoke on the power of obedience to the guru, saying, “Organizations that have a lineage of living satgurus are truly fortunate, for the divine blessings of a living satguru help us to make much greater spiritual progress in our lifetime than is otherwise possible. Of course, this acceleration of spiritual progress is not automatic—rather it happens because we are obedient. *Obedience* is a word that does not fall easily from most people’s tongue in these modern times. But it is an essential quality of good character, and we should not be afraid of the idea, even if others are. In truth, obedience is the guiding principle of families, businesses, peace-keeping forces and, of course, spiritual institutions around the world, of every faith.” After his talk, dozens of devotees and saints were recognized by Pramukh Swami for their contribution to the successful completion of the project. Three days later the temple was thrown open to the public.

#### The Akshardham Experience

Most visitors will approach Akshardham from the Delhi side of the Yamuna River via the Nizamuddin bridge, driving into the back of the complex through small farm plots to a sprawling parking area for thousands of cars. In front of the parking area is an immense lawn and landscaped area

called Bharat Upvan, Gardens of India, first stop on the way to the main monument. Set in the gardens are dozens of larger-than-life bronze statues of the great role models of India. They include warriors such as Chhatrapati Shivaji, freedom fighters such as Subhashchandra Bose and national luminaries such as Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda. A display of great women includes Draupadi of the *Mahabharata* and Saint Mirabai; and another for children includes Nachiketa of the *Upanishads* who faced the God of Death, and Shravan, who carried his ailing parents on pilgrimage across India.

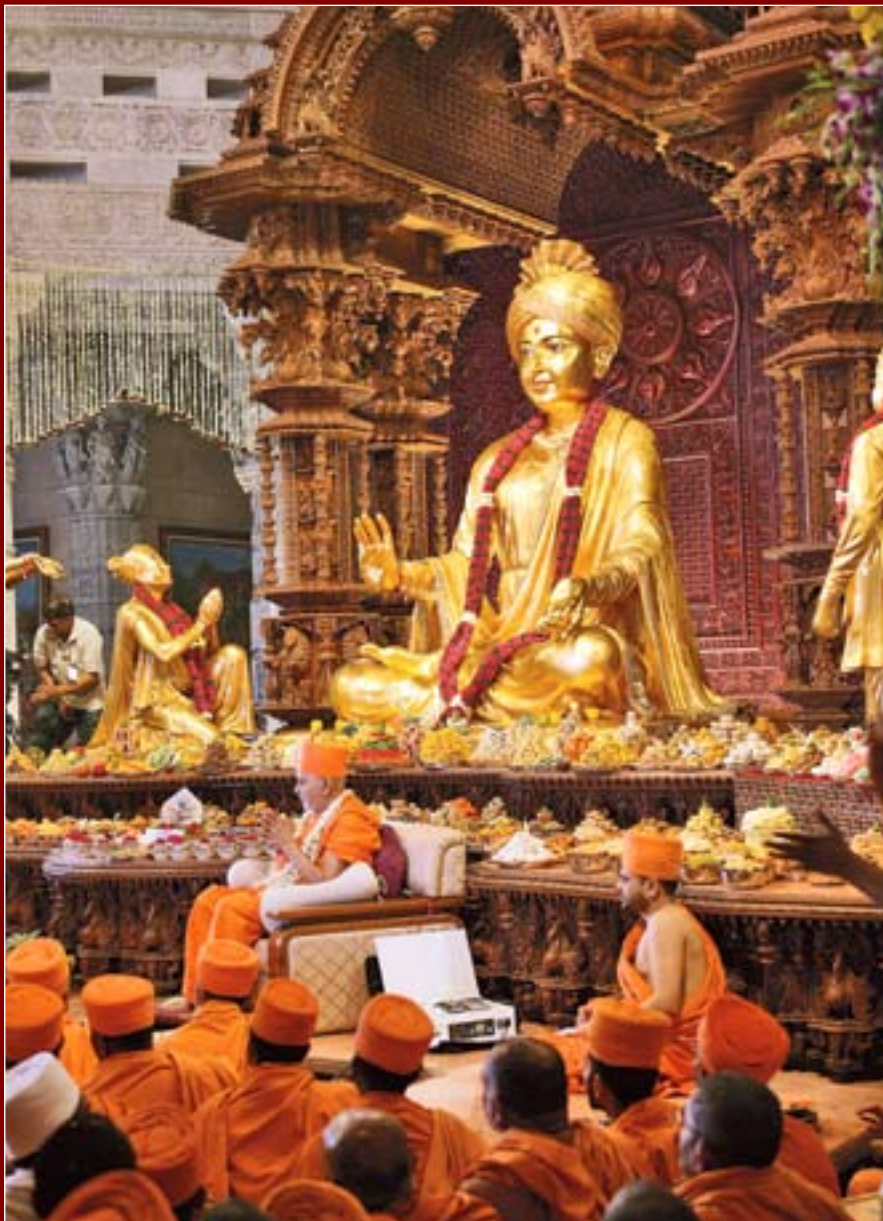
Looking beyond the gardens, one is face-to-face with the immense central monument, securely ensconced within a lengthy outer colonnade. It is indeed difficult to believe the project was completed in just five years. To enter this area, one must pass through

the security area, run by BAPS volunteers with military and police backgrounds. Security is tight here, though unobtrusive. Sheel Gadhiya, a volunteer in the public relations department, commented, “Every day around ten to twelve thousand people are visiting. On weekends we get 35 to 45 thousand, and expect this to go up.”

The monument area proper is entered through Mayur Dwar, Peacock Gate, with its 869 sculpted peacocks. “When the devotee enters the temple he should feel he has been transported one thousand years back, that he is entering a different era, not a museum,” explained Srijiswaroopswami, the



Srijiswaroopswami



AT THE FEET OF LORD SWAMINARAYAN



SATELLITE PHOTO OF AKSHARDHAM AND CENTRAL DELHI

MUSICAL FOUNTAINS AT NIGHT

GOOGLE EARTH

The satellite photo above shows Akshardham’s location along the Yamuna River. It is near the middle of greater Delhi, on land purchased from the local governments.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj (left) presides at the consecration ceremony of the Lord Swaminarayan statue in the central monument. Offering the many trays of food was part of the dedication ceremony.

Every evening the fountains with a kaleidoscope of sounds and colors entertain visitors. At [www.hinduismtoday.com](http://www.hinduismtoday.com), you can download the digital edition of Hinduism Today and click on this photo frame to see a 15-minute movie on Akshardham produced by BAPS.

artist in charge of design for Akshardham Delhi. Giving what he informed us was his first interview in 35 years as a sadhu, he explained, “Everything is pure Indian art form selected from motifs from seventh- to tenth-century temples.” Asked how such a great monument was created, he responded, “Pramukh Swamiji had faith in getting this monument made. That inspired everyone to think at that level. With more money, a more delicate temple could have been built.

But here the faith shows and the stones are speaking.”

A broad, paved path framed by lawns and gardens leads from the peacock gate to the central monument housing the 11-foot-high gold-plated *murti* of Lord Swaminarayan, surrounded by his successors, Gunatitand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The structure itself is Rajasthan sandstone on the outside and Italian marble on the

inside. Every surface is intricately carved. Adorning the inner walls and ceilings are 1,200 statues and statuettes, 120 ornate pillars and 40 filigreed arches.

One is struck repeatedly with the sheer artistry of the work. While based completely within the norms of traditional Hindu architecture, brilliant creativity is apparent everywhere. For example, dozens of near life-sized marble statues of a devotee in a devotional mood at the top of the pillars





A VIEW OF THE INTRICATELY CARVED CENTRAL DOME

support the domes. The poses are taken from *bharata natyam* dance, and each is exquisitely graceful (seen in photo above). And this is just one feature.

Once outside again, visitors can circumambulate the monument by following the elephant plinth. This is a series of 60 scenes of elephants, depicted in their natural habitat, in their life with man and in the divine world. This project alone, with carvings of 148 individual elephants, 125 humans and 42 other animals, required four years of work by sixty sculptors and six million pounds of stone. Also on the outside walls are dozens of forms of Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed Lord of Dharma, each executed with striking artistry. There are literally tens of thousands of such images of Gods, divine beings and saints. Surround-

ing the elephant plinth on three sides is Narayan Sarovar, a shallow moat that contains holy water from 151 lakes and rivers sanctified by Lord Swaminarayan during his lifetime. Devotees can sit by this moat, do their prayers and make water offerings in the traditional way.

"This is the most beautiful monument I have ever seen in my life," said Dharmendra Pramod Bhai Patel, 44. He is a Swaminarayan devotee, and a medical professional. "Being a *satsangi* of BAPS," he explained, "every-one dreams of going to heaven, which we call Akshardham. But I have seen Akshardham while I am alive." He added, "New Delhi did not have something like this which truly represented Hinduism. Therefore this is a good development for the city."

The immense courtyard around the cen-

tral monument is a combination of wide, paved pathways, lawn and gardens, all laying within a 3,000-foot-long, two-story colonnade which also serves as a circum-ambulatory path. Aside from the central monument—of which we have described only a few of its features—there are exhibition halls and a huge step well with a musical fountain, Yagnapurush Kund, where a sound, water and light show is performed every evening.

The first of the two exhibitions is a charming 12-minute "Cultural Boat Ride" reminiscent of something in Disneyland. The boats are not powered, but drift with the flowing water through exhibits of ten thousand years of Indian history. The displays include a village of Vedic India, Takshashila, the world's first university, an astronomical observatory and the tools and techniques of the early Ayurvedic physicians. Narration is given in Hindi or English as visitors wind through the cave-like river circuit.

The second exhibition hall, the "Hall of Values," is a series of displays, dioramas and audio-animatronic presentations from the life of Lord Swaminarayan. There is a similar exhibition hall at the Akshardham complex in Gandhinagar, opened in 1992, but the Delhi hall is technically and artistically much more advanced. Eighteenth-century India is recreated through life-like robots

that move and speak, teaching the values of nonviolence, prayer, morality and more.

By far the most impressive feature is the giant screen theatre showing the film *Neelkanth Yatra* on the early life of Lord Swaminarayan. The screen is 85 feet wide and 65 feet tall, with the seating arranged in such steep tiers that one has the sense of sitting on a precipice. The movie itself was an immense project utilizing the same technology as the Imax films. It was shot at 108 locations in India with a cast of 45,000. All this was done during the same time the Akshardham Delhi project was being built—a testament to the BAPS organization's astounding abilities to accomplish monumental tasks. As with Akshardham Delhi, it was the organization's volunteers and sadhus who shouldered most of the work, with experts and artisans hired only as needed.

Abhishek Sharma, a class-six student at Jinabani Bharati Public School in Dwaraka Colony of Delhi, commented, "The movie *Neelkanth Yatra* shows how even a small child can change this world by his imagination. If one works in a determined fashion, there is nothing which is impossible in this world." Tanushree Holkar, a class-eight student of the same



Abhishek Sharma

APPLYING FINISHING TOUCHES



Looking into the chamber of the gold-plated *murti* of Lord Swaminarayan, one is awed by the ornate carvings. The dome is stabilized by the single central stone visible at top. About one-third of the way up the two pillars framing the sanctum are examples of the sculptures of a devotee in various moods of devotion.

Of the 7,000 stone carvers hired for the project, 1,500 were stationed at the Delhi site to fit and put finishing touches on and assemble the stones as they came in from various village workshops.

From October 13 to the official opening on November 6, 6,000 BAPS devotees per day visited Akshardham for a preview tour. A small city was set up next to the grounds to accommodate and serve the guests.

DEVOTEES AWAIT THE ARRIVAL OF PRAMUKH SWAMI







ALL PHOTOS BAPS

THE PLINTH OF ELEPHANTS SURROUNDS THE MAIN MONUMENT

school, said, “The change in my life after being here is that I will stop this showing off business and be a good child. I will study hard for my own betterment and also help others in whatever way I can. Today I feel proud to be an Indian.” Anuja Pant, their teacher, added, “These exhibitions give them pause and compel them to ponder in which direction their lives are going. I cried after listening to these teaching of Lord Swaminarayan. The effect was so profound. I saw many of the boys and girls also in tears.”

#### Creating this Heaven on Earth

Once the land was formally acquired in the year 2000, the hard part must have seemed over for many within BAPS. They had spent the preceding 32 years, from the time in 1968 when Yogiji Maharaj expressed his vision of a temple along the Yamuna River, just to acquire the site. The land in question along the Yamuna is farm land owned by the local governments, the municipal Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the state of Uttar Pradesh. There were many false starts, grants given and then revoked and abortive attempts to place the temple elsewhere. Finally, in 1997 and 1998, a host of national and state government officials,

engineers and others agreed that, as part of a plan to develop 25 kilometers of the river’s banks, the particular area along the Yamuna that would become Akshardham was suitable for “cultural and spiritual purposes.” It was a great act of faith on the part of the governments to turn this land over to BAPS, trusting that they would create something that would be the pride of all India.

While plans had been begun in 1994, it was only upon the formal acquisition of the land that work began in earnest on all fronts at once: blueprints, site preparation, stone quarrying and carving, exhibition preparation, etc. It was a marvel of coordination utilizing every ancient and modern means of construction and management.

Sadhu Anandswarup Das, head of Akshardham Gandhinagar, was part of the team of eight sadhus formed for building the Delhi project. Most were also involved in building the Gandhinagar project and brought a great deal of practical experience with them. But more than that, they brought a spiritual way of working together, and with their guru, which made the seemingly impossible possible. “Before we decided something,” he explained, “we would brainstorm it to come up with new ideas. Then we’d go

to Pramukh Swami, tell him what we were thinking, and he would fine tune it.”

“We are not a professional group of sadhus who are expert architects and designers,” Swami went on. “We are simple sadhus who are doing our prayers and doing something for our guru, for Lord Swaminarayan and for India and Indian culture. Our team of eight handled three thousand volunteers and seven thousand craftsmen working all over India for five years. In this huge project, there has never been anybody shouting and arguing.” He explained that teams of sadhus were sent around India and as far as Angkor Wat in Cambodia to study Indian architecture prior to the Muslim period. Everywhere they found inspiration for details which ultimately appeared in the monument’s domes, walls, plinths and sculptures.

More than two dozen workshops were established at Pindvada and Sikandra in Rajasthan and surrounding villages. Seven



Anandswarup Das

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As visitors follow the lower circumambulation path around the main monument, they view 148 full-sized elephants set in the adjacent plinth. The elephants are arrayed along a 1,070-foot wall, first in scenes from nature, then interacting with man and lastly in the divine world.

Visitors gently flow along the Saraswati River in the Cultural Boat Ride past various scenes from India’s history. Here is depicted the observatory of Aryabhata, the Indian astronomer who calculated the Earth’s circumference and accurately estimated the value of pi 1,500 years ago. Other scenes include a Vedic village, the caves of Ajanta and the Kailas temple at Ellora as well as episodes from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.



THIS EXHIBITION SCENE DEPICTS ASTRONOMERS OF ANCIENT INDIA





Dozens of large bronzes depict national heroes of India and spiritual leaders of Hinduism, including Mahatma Gandhi (above), King Vikramaditya, Swami Vivekananda, Shivaji, Draupadi, Maitreyi and Gargi. One section is dedicated to child heroes, including Lava and Kush (the twin sons of Lord Rama), and Shravan, the child saint who carried his parents on pilgrimage around India.

Each petal of the Yogihriday Kamal includes messages from internationally renowned figures, including Vivekananda ("The mainspring strength of every race lies in its spirituality and death of that race begins the day that spirituality wanes and materialism gains ground."), Shakespeare ("There is a Divinity that shapes our ends."), and Ralph Waldo Emerson ("To be is to live with God. ").

thousand carvers were put to work. These included local farmers left idle by drought who were pressed into service as stone carvers, much to their economic gain. Many became adept carvers. Fifteen hundred tribal women, likewise idled by the drought, were hired to polish stones by hand. Work went on day and night, from quarrying to carving to transporting the ready rocks to Delhi. Preliminary shaping was accomplished in short order with huge stone-cutting machines, while detail work was completed patiently by hand. The excellent balance of method resulted in a monument which appears hand carved, without a "machined" look to it.

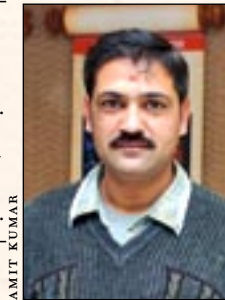
In Delhi, the first order of business was the foundation. The site was hardly ideal from a structural point of view. Studies had determined the Yamuna River was

unlikely to change course back toward the site—it was gradually moving away at this bend toward Delhi. But to build a huge temple on a soft river bank required a deep foundation, 15 feet of rocks and sand interlaced with wire mesh and topped by five feet of concrete. Five million specially fired bricks raised the foundation another 21.5 feet, which was then capped by three more feet of concrete to form the main plinth under the monument.

Complex computer programs tracked the stones from quarry to Delhi where 4,000 workers and volunteers manned the site. The huge trucks could only travel through Delhi at night, so one set of volunteers worked nights for years supervising their arriv-

al while thousands more toiled through the days to complete the monument in record time, all coordinated by Pramukh Swami's sadhus.

Vijay Bhai Chawada is a BAPS devotee and ex-army officer responsible for the security of the entire complex. During the five years



Vijay Bhai Chawada

of building, he had the onerous duty of receiving and checking in over one hundred trucks of stones every night. "Even during my army days, I never did so many night duties as I have in the past five years," he confided. "It is a miracle that despite being awake during the night for years together, I never fell sick, nor did I experience any problem with my eyes, which is associated with not sleeping at

night. At the time, eight to ten of us slept in a small tin shed, complete with kitchen and temple." He doesn't mention some of the other challenges, such as the mosquitoes and weather—howling storms in winter, and Delhi's scorching sun in the summer.

#### Mission Accomplished

Despite all the austerities and hardships, Akshardham Delhi was completed on time and beyond anyone's expectations. Hindus around the world have a place which shows the best of India and the best of Hinduism. Brahmavihariswami summarized the process, "We were just a group of devoted sadhus and volunteers working together, absorbing and being open to the inspiration of God and guru. And in the process of this, something beautiful has happened."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.AKSHARDHAM.COM](http://WWW.AKSHARDHAM.COM)

THE YOGIHRIDAY KAMAL IS IN THE FORM OF A SIX-PETALED LOTUS







Hundreds of monastic followers gather to hear the 74 saints express their concerns about the state of Hinduism in India today

ALL PHOTOS: MILIND KETKAR/DINODIA

## CONFERENCES

# To Be a United Voice for Hinduism

Leading saints tackle government interference, conversion, and more in Mumbai

BY RAJIV MALIK, DELHI

SEVENTY-FOUR TOP HINDU SWAMIS gathered in Mumbai from October 16 to 18, 2005, for the second meeting of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha. The event, held at Sanyas Ashrama, Vile Parle West, was meticulously organized by Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. It followed on a similar gathering in Chennai two years ago. The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha (“Organization of Teachers of the Hindu Religion”) brought together in the two meetings many of the religion’s top leaders on an unprecedented scale. Present in Mumbai were saints

from *sampradayas*, or teaching lineages, spanning the Hindu theological spectrum. They included the *sampradayas* of Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Ramanand Charya, Sen, Kabir, Satradhikar, Saiva, Varkari, Saiva Aadheenams and Swaminarayan. There were also representatives of the four Shankara centers. The saints included prominent leaders of the Mahanirvani monastic order and its branches. This order has hundreds of thousands of sadhus. [See the inside front cover for a three-page gallery of many of the saints in attendance.]

Swami Dayananda said, “The Sabha is committed to speak for Hindu Dharma

and represent the interests and views of the Hindu population of India. For the same reason, the Acharya Sabha shall have the mandate to engage in discussion with any one or any government or any other entity, including those representing different religions, on matters of importance to Hindus. We are seeking to create a single voice that could speak for the entire Hindu society and fight against the shabby and discriminatory treatment being meted out to Hindus and Hinduism in India.”

During the three-day event, each saint was given twenty minutes to speak. Many complained that although Hindus are in



**Saintly gathering:** (left) Swami Dayananda Saraswati, organizer of the Acharya Sabha; (above) Hundreds of devotees waited each day for the saints to arrive or depart from the meeting to greet them and take their blessings.

plasma screens displayed larger-than-life-size, live images of the saints addressing the convention. Many people waiting outside the high-security venue rushed to greet the saints each time they came and went. There at the personal invitation of Swami

Dayananda, photographer Milind Ketkar and I were the only media persons allowed to attend the proceedings.

The conference was held in Hindi, though Swami Dayananda characterized his own Hindi as “a bit doubtful.” Twelve translators provided simultaneous renderings into Hindi, English, Kannada, Tamil, Marathi and Assamese. “We allowed,” Swamiji said, “the acharyas to express their views in their own native languages so they could do so fluently without searching for words.”

I spoke with many of the saints, and they shared their concerns. On the following page are the extended remarks of Swami Avadeshanda Giri, one of the leading lights of the enormous Juna Akara monastic order. Swami Dayananda said, “Temples and monasteries are created by the offerings of the devotees. Whenever there are complaints of misappropriation of funds or misuse of money, the government tries to take them over [under a special provision of Indian law which, in theory, could be applied to any religion, but in practice is applied only to Hindu institutions]. It is like cutting the head of a person if there is a headache. We feel that it would be better if a judicial committee is formed to look into such cases and solve the problem. Moreover, the temple wealth and income should not be allowed to be treated as a source of patronage by political leaders and used for purposes other than the welfare of the temples and Hindu society to which the wealth rightfully belongs.” He said the Sabha would undertake

legal research on remedies to this situation.

On the issue of conversion, Swamiji said that Hindu preachers would be trained to go out to the distant villages and tribal communities to reassure the people that their indigenous religious faiths shall be preserved, and that their educational, health, economic and social needs will be attended to.

Gurusharanandadaji, head of Sri Udasin Karshni Ashram in Mathura, explained, “The irony is that we are the majority in India but still our voice is not being listened to. We ourselves are responsible for all this, and it is time we introspected on the matter. We are not united, and we have to change. We have to ponder if we are giving proper training to our new acharyas to face the new challenges in today’s world.”

Swami Sankarananda Saraswati, head of the Sri Jnaneshvar Mutt Trust in Mumbai, observed, “For the ancient *mutts*, unauthorized possession of their ashrams and properties is a big problem. For instance, most of our time goes in to fighting legal battles with those who are occupying our properties in an illegal manner. Even the banks connive with these squatters. Another problem is the government eyeing the properties of sadhus and *mutts* who do not have a clear-cut successor.”

Swami Shivswaroopananda, head of Manva Kalyan Ashram in Haridwar, recounted, “In Rajasthan there are many Muslims who celebrate Hindu festivals like Holi and Diwali. They would like to come back to Hinduism. But their main concern is that, once they become Hindus, would the Hindu community accept their daughters and sons getting married to their children? And if this is not possible, then why should they come back to the fold of Hinduism?”

Nachiappa Jana Desika Swami, head of Kovilur Vedanta Mutt in Tamil Nadu, warned, “We must not complain about the





other *sampradayas*, but coordinate among ourselves in a better manner. We should have our own directory and website.”

Sri Ananda Chaitanya Saraswati, head of the Anand Ashram in Haridwar, offered, “What Hindu community needs today is *shiksha* (education), *sanskars* (culture) and *sangathan* (unity). Islam and Christianity are taking advantage of our divisiveness and flourishing in this country. It is high time that our own shakti [power] must be awakened. We must become one, we must have an identity of our own. Our kids must have a distinct identity of their own. They must wear *kurtas* and *topis* [traditional Hindu shirts and head-gear]. Islam has a dress of their own, and Christians also have a dress of their own. Similarly, we must have an identity of our own as well.”

Swami Vidhyabhinava Vidyarana, of Karnataka, warned, “While collecting the donation money for our various projects, we must ensure that the money we collect is good money and not bad money.” Swami Advaitanandaji Maharaj, of Maharashtra, advised, “Hindus must attach a lot of importance to the well-being and development of their

women. The emphasis on women should be there, as it is they who pass on the good *sam-skaras* (impressions) to the new generation.”

Swami Sri Balagangadharnatha, head of Adi Chunchanagiri Mutt, Karnataka, said, “It is not just the Kanchi Shankaracharya. Today all of us are being attacked and defamed. Large-scale conversion is taking place, but when we question it, we are attacked. If we do not wake up, the day is not far off when foreigners will again start ruling us. Today a lot of government interference is there in the field of education. This has to be stopped. If the government does not listen to us, we will have to warn the government on this matter. The government must allow us to preserve our great ancient heritage and culture. Today we see that use of drugs and violence is there all around us. We must work for ridding society of drugs and violence. Drugs are being used for spoiling our young generation.”

Sri Abhinava Vidya Shankara Bharati, representative of Sringeri Mutt in Karnataka, said, “Our ancient rishis had intended sannyasins to totally devote themselves to the promotion and propagation of Sanatana

**Audience:** *Many monastics, both men and women, including these sadhvis, attended from the Chinmaya Mission, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and other organizations*

Dharma. But today we are beset with legal problems and must spend time defending our own monasteries and temples in courts. The real cause for which we should work, propagation of dharma, is suffering as a result.”

Many swamis also gather at the Kumbha Mela, but for the purpose of interacting with their devotees and members of their monastic orders. This gathering was unique in its attempt to create a collective consciousness of top Hindu saints from all lineages and to establish a permanent forum from which the Hindu voice will be heard in a timely fashion. Its biggest strength is that it is totally apolitical—associated with no political party and harboring no political ambitions. Its greatest responsibility lies in the fact that the Hindu world will have very high expectations of this newly formed body.

ACHARYA SABHA ORGANIZER: SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI, ARSHA VIDYA GURUKULAM, PO BOX 1059, SAYLORSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA, 18353, USA, OR ANAIKATTI PO, COIMBATORE, 641108, INDIA



## INTERVIEW

# Room for Improvement

Swami Avadheshananda shares his thoughts on the Acharya Sabha, temples, youth and more

*During the Acharya Sabha Mumbai meeting, Hinduism Today reporter Rajiv Malik interviewed Junapeethadheeshwar Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Avadheshananda Ji Giri, a leading saint of Juna Akara monastic order.*

### What is the purpose of forming this Acharya Sabha?

We want to speak in a united manner in the interest of the 85 percent Hindus of India, and Hindus all over the world. Our ways of worship may be different, our ways of thinking or belief systems may be different, but we are one from the viewpoint of spirituality.

### What is your view on Hindu temples?

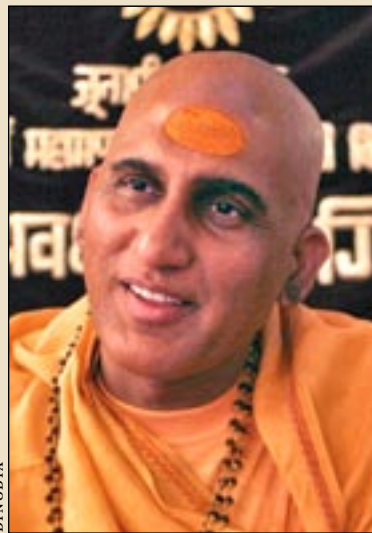
There are thousands of temples all over India that are in a very bad condition. The government does not care to take them over because they have no income. In one particular state of India, the government is earning around US\$11 million annually from the income of the temples that are under government control. But out of this income of \$11 million, only \$2.3 million is being spent on the maintenance and development of the temples. The rest of the money is being spent on things that have nothing to do with temples or Hindu religion. There are temples where there are no roads, no arrangement for lighting and no arrangement for feeding the devotees. Even the puja worship is not taking place in a

proper manner. Today four hundred thousand temples in India are under government control. If the government really wants to take over the temples, they must also take over those where there is a lack of funds.

But is this even necessary? Is Hindu society so weak that it cannot take care of its temples? It is the *dharmacharyas* who should decide how the temples are to be managed and who should manage them. It is not an issue to be left to the state governments.

### What is your concern about education?

This country is running towards development and therefore the ideal for the youth of this country is the Silicon Valley in the US and Singapore. Today's youth want to earn more and more dollars. There is a need to come up with programs that connect the youth of this country to our own roots, that inspire them with love for their own nation and love for their own religion. The education we are giving to the children is lopsided. The day we include the love of nation and respect for their own heritage and moral values in the education will be a day that benefits all.



DINODIA

But today if Saraswati Mantra is recited, there are people who oppose it. Today if Saraswati is worshiped in the schools of this country, it is considered something communal and there is a lot of hue and cry about it. What kind of upliftment of youth or direction of youth is given when you are snatching the reciting of Saraswati Mantra from them?

### What is your message for youth on morals?

In the West many people are not following good, moral values. They cannot lead a peaceful life. In America some 41 percent of marriages end in divorce or separation within 15 years. Many people there have a live-in relationship without getting married. If our youth see that society and country with its live-in relationships as the ideal, what kind of new generation can we expect? What will be the character of children born of such relationships? What will be ideals of such children?

I am not criticizing America, but can America ever be the ideal for the people of India? Our divorce rate is also increasing. It is increasing more in the metropolitan cities than in the villages. It is increasing because we have started considering America our ideal country. Are people in the USA peaceful after getting divorced? Does a lot of money bring peace to their lives?

Our rishis have spoken of four important factors that govern our lives. They are dharma, artha, kama and moksha—righteousness, wealth, pleasure and liberation from rebirth. How do you have control over kama without dharma? Without good values and being spiritual, how will you manage money? Making money is a great art, but how you spend the money after earning it may be an even higher art—a greater skill than earning it. Where should the money be spent, where should it be invested? In our country, your income gets distributed among every member of your family, and members of your extended families. Money even goes to your neighbors. But in America life is about spending all the money on Saturday and Sunday.

Right now the message on the value of celibacy, *brahmacharya*, is not reaching the youth. It needs to be conveyed that only if you can control your senses, can you attain a high level of

development. Money should not be your only goal in life. You must aspire to have qualities that include restraint of senses and good character. If your senses are not under control and you lack strength of character, moral values and *brahmacharya*, then the heights of life will be far away from your reach. We must teach our youth the management of *brahmacharya*.

### How should we improve care for the elderly today?

The trend of neglecting our elderly people is very wrong, and it is something to worry about. Old people's homes are now being set up in this country. I am amazed at this development. Ashrams should definitely be set up in the country, but are old people's homes a part of the culture of this country? This era is a time when cultural values are being diminished. But that does not mean that everything is going to come to an end; it means that spring is going to come.

### Who is a Hindu?

He is a Hindu who has respect for this country and who treats it as his own country. A Hindu is one who has faith in various Gods and Goddesses and also in his mother and father. He believes that God resides in all the living beings of this world. He believes that God is all-pervading. God is there in each and every speck of dust. Hindu dharma believes that mother, father, guest all are *devatas*, divine beings. A Hindu believes the elements of *agni*, fire; and *vayu*, wind; are also *devatas*. Hindu dharma means, “*Sarve bhavantu sukhina, sarve santu niramaya*,” “Let all be happy and free from disease.” Hindu dharma means, “*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*,” “The whole world is a family.” We do not seek to forcefully convert anyone to our religion. We do not want to snatch someone's dharma from him. A Hindu is concerned about the balance of ecology. A Hindu is concerned about the welfare of the whole world. He believes, “*Para dra-vya losthavrata*,” “The wealth of another is to be treated like a speck of dust.” For him the meaning of dharma is, “*Parhit saras dharma nahin bhai*,” “There is no greater religion than the welfare of others.” Such a person, whose thinking is on these lines, we will call a Hindu.



# Tagore's Spiritual Legacy

Only late in life did fame find the Bengali writer, playwright, composer, poet, philosopher and artist known as the founder of modern Indian literature

IN HIS BOOK *SADHANA*, RABINDRANATH Tagore relates an experience of meeting two Hindu ascetics. He asks them why they don't go out into the world to preach the sacred word. One of the ascetics replies, "Whoever feels thirsty will of himself come to the river. They must come, one and all." Certainly, through the years, thousands of such ready souls have flooded to the river of Tagore's outpourings. Each could tell an entirely different story of his encounter with this man's thought. One might be led to assume that anyone looking for anything could find something satisfying in the work of this divergent writer.

Tagore is indisputably acknowledged as the founder of modern literature in India, although he is perhaps most famous as the author of India's unofficial national anthem. Yet, history waits to frame the greater legacy of this man, for the massive volume of his work continues to elude obvious categorization and full appreciation.

Tagore was born in 1861, the thirteenth child in a wealthy, Bengali brahmin family that was devoutly Hindu yet also strongly political. His father and grandfather were deeply involved with an emerging religious movement called the Brahmo Samaj (See sidebar). In this atmosphere, the precocious Rabindranath developed a fiercely individual perception of life from a young age.

As he begins to write, Tagore's spiritual perspective is surprisingly difficult to pinpoint, for his thoughts on God, soul and divinity are more implied than explicit in the broader substance of his work, which is multi-faceted and sometimes abstract. In *The Religion of Man*, based on the Hibbert Lectures he delivered in 1930 at Harvard

University, Tagore characterizes his own religious beliefs as "...a poet's religion... neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian." The more we learn of

Tagore and his work, the more we come to realize that access to his inner nature is vexedly labyrinthine, despite the prolificacy and profundity of his writings.

He was referred to as "the Indian Goethe" by Albert Schweitzer, "the Great Sentinel" by Mahatma Gandhi, and "Gurudev" by his disciples. Writing was always a great source of inspiration for Tagore. His masterpiece, *Rabisangeet*, consisted of more than two thousand songs—all of which he wrote, recorded and sang. While he was revered as a guardian of tradition in Bengal—he recalls in *The Religion of Man* that, during his *upanayana* (coming-

Tagore at age 70

of-age, sacred thread ceremony) he experienced "a serene exaltation"—his religious beliefs were paradoxically unorthodox for his time. He was criticized by some for his efforts to reform Hinduism via the Brahmo Samaj movement, and introduce it to the West. Tagore felt that, with its postulation of monotheism, the Brahmo Samaj theology would be more palatable to Christians who might willingly embrace a pantheistic Hinduism.

In his writings, Tagore scarcely mentions the *Puranas* or the *Bhagavad Gita*, two popular scriptural texts often referred to by Hindus of his time. Instead, he focused primarily on man's oneness with God. He was obviously influenced by the monism of the *Upanishads*. Again and again, he repeated that humanity's mission on this physical plane is to merge with God. In *Sadhana* he states, "Man becomes perfect man, he attains his

fullest expression, when his soul realizes itself in the Infinite being who is *Avih*, whose very essence is expression." From Tagore's perspective, man is constantly evolving, and divine union is his assured destination. "Religion only finds itself when it touches the Brahman in man," Tagore observes in *The Religion of Man*, "otherwise it has no reason to exist." In *Sadhana*, he writes, "This is the ultimate end of man, to find the One which is in him, which is his truth, which is his soul; the key with which he opens the gate of the spiritual life." Bits and pieces of his writings taken together outline his overall concept of man's spiritual path, which

## The Brahmo Samaj

An abbreviated summary of principles

Followers shall worship the One Absolute Parambrahma.

Followers shall not adore any created thing, thinking it to be the Supreme One.

Followers should serve God by performing good deeds.

He is the One, Alone and Absolute.

The Samaj is to be a meeting ground for all sects for the worship of the One True God.

No object of worship or set of men shall be reviled.

No graven image shall be admitted.

No object animate or inanimate shall be worshipped.

No sacrifice is permitted.

Promote charity, morality, piety, benevolence and virtue, and strengthen the bonds of union between men of all religions and creeds.

might be summarized as follows: *Life is man's journey toward the realization of his fullest potential, which is union with God. That journey is best facilitated by the avoidance of worldly distraction.*

Examples of the correlation between the *Upanishads* and Tagore's writings are not hard to find. The *Mundaka Upanishad* states that "Like two golden birds perched on the selfsame tree, intimate friends, the ego and the Self, dwell in the same body." In *Sadhana* Tagore writes, "When man's consciousness is restricted only to the immediate vicinity of his human self, the deeper roots of his nature do not find their permanent soil.... His greatness [is measured] by its bulk and not by its vital link with the infinite."

In differentiating between earthly knowledge and sacred wisdom, Tagore again takes his cue from principles often repeated in the *Upanishads*. "[Man] has to discover that accumulation is not realization," he writes in *Sadhana*. "It is the inner light that reveals him, not outer things."

Tagore considered man the highest of God's creations. He writes, "The world has found its culmination in man, its best expression. Man, as a creation, represents the Creator." Having asserted that man is divine, he describes his nature as having two aspects: the malleable ego and the eternal and permanent Self. "On the surface of our being, we have the ever-changing phases of

the individual self, but in the depth there dwells the Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge." While he recognizes that man must strive to achieve perfection, he expresses his confidence that man is endowed with an inherent Divinity that assures his success.

His primary literary theme was man's achievement of moksha, which is, according

to Webster: "liberation from the cycle of rebirth impelled by the law of karma." Rather than laboring in philosophical analysis, Tagore's writings amplified the devotional inspiration of surrendering to God and serving humanity with love. Even his political views were deeply influenced by this poetic and devotional view of life.

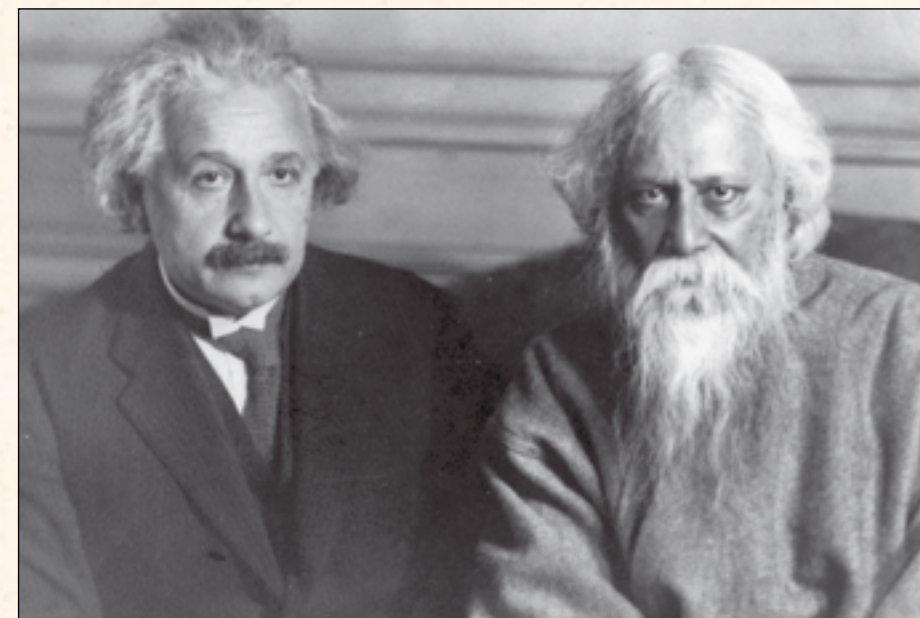
There is a notable thread of soul-bearing honesty running through his work. Although he affirms his belief in reincarnation as "a history of constant regeneration, a series of fresh beginnings," he also writes in *The Religion of Man* that, "All I feel from religion is from vision and not from knowledge. Frankly, I acknowledge that I cannot satisfactorily answer any questions about what happens after death."

Much of Tagore's religious inspiration came from nature. It was nature that gave his poetry its ethereal beauty. *Gitanjali*, one of his best-known works, for which he won the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, is a poem celebrating the nature worship of his "Vedic ancestors." This work, so lofty in its abstract worship, also revels his deep patriotism to India. In one of *Gitanjali*'s most popular passages, Verse 35, Tagore blends his deep love of country with his faith in God.

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free; Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Where words*



**Relishing the glory of international preeminence:** During the last years of his life, Tagore visits England where he is greeted as a gifted poet of singular vision



**A meeting of great minds:** Rabindranath Tagore and Albert Einstein discuss quantum physics and "free will" at Einstein's residence in the suburbs of Berlin on July 14, 1930



come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its  
arms towards perfection; Where the  
clear stream of reason has not lost  
its way into the dreary desert sand  
of dead habit; Where the mind is led  
forward by thee into ever-widening  
thought and action—Into that heaven  
of freedom, my Father, let my country  
awake.

This verse is particularly revealing of Tagore's devotional love for his homeland. It focuses less on what India is than what it can become. Similarly, Tagore defines his religious beliefs more by what they are not than what they are. Yet his beliefs, both patriotic and religious, are never without a fundamental faith in a personal God and the role He plays in leading India toward a better life that Tagore also hopes might be possible for all of mankind.

Tagore's patriotism was paradoxical. While he clearly loved his country, he was sharply critical of nationalists. This provoked controversy for him in his native Bengal. His novel, *The Home and the World*, was dismissed

by critics as "immoral and unpatriotic" because it characterized Sandip, a Bengali revolutionary leader, as a fanatic, a womanizer and a hypocrite. In *Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology*, editors Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson write, "The 'home' and the 'world' referred to his own mind divided against itself...to India versus Britain, to the East versus the West..." Tagore was also occasionally reviled as an Anglophile and disrespected for being a brahmin with a wealthy, elite background.

Tagore was a man committed to ideals that were not popular during his lifetime, such as female emancipation and freedom of individual expression. He suffered much condemnation for investigating these issues publicly, via his writing. The political tensions created from this must have troubled him deeply. Yet he did not waver.

In 1901, Tagore founded a school for children in a place called Santiniketan, which means "Abode of Peace." Eventually, it became a university, which he named Visva-Bharati. He envisioned Visva-Bharati as a place where the East could meet the West. To commemorate this sentiment, he chose

a Sanskrit verse for the school's motto: "Yatra visvam bhavatieka nidam," meaning, "Where the whole world meets in a single nest." In 1863, he founded an ashram in the same place.

Tagore believed that a poet of singular vision could earn his rightful place among saints and sages. In *Galpaguchha*, he writes, "Like the Supreme Creator, he [the poet], too, creates his work out of his own self."

Through his abundant writings, Tagore gave his all. And for that, he earned a permanent place in the history of India. No one has stepped forward to match the thought-provoking effect he had on his cherished homeland. No one in the recent history of Bharat has ever written so broadly, so deeply, so fearlessly—yet so spiritually—that he could be extolled and remembered as "the myriad-minded man."

By MAITREYA HAWTHORNE, California

Maitreya Hawthorne is a graduate student in English at Sonoma State University in California, where she is writing her thesis on Rabindranath Tagore.

## A Brief Biography of a Sage Among Poets

**B**ORN IN CALCUTTA, RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941) received his earliest education at home within the warm embrace of a large, wealthy, extended family. Although his father wanted him to be a barrister and sent him to law school in England when he was 17, young Rabindranath did not finish his studies there. Instead, he returned to India where he slowly accrued moderate success in Calcutta as a writer, playwright, songwriter, poet and philosopher. As he got older, he helped manage the family estates, a role which kept him in touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. In 1883, Tagore married Mrinalini Devi Raichaudhuri, with whom he had two sons and three daughters. Rabindranath's father was a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, a religious movement formed in 1928 to revive the monistic teachings of the *Upanishads* as a fundamental basis of Hinduism. Although clearly influenced by the thinking of his father, he was—first and foremost—an artist. He occasionally delved into Indian politics and was a close friend of Mahatma Gandhi. He was opposed to nationalism and militarism as a matter of principle and chose to deal with the social and political challenges of the times by supporting and promoting spiritual values. His dream was to create a new world culture founded on diversity, tolerance and multi-culturalism.

Tagore's life changed dramatically in 1912, when at 51 he returned to England for the first time in 35 years. He made this journey by boat and used the lazy hours at sea to translate his latest selection of poems, entitled *Gitanjali*, into English. Until then, he had authored his works only in his

native tongue of Bengali. This was his first attempt at translation. In England, a friend of his—a famous artist he had met in India named Rothenstein—learned of the translation and asked to see it. Reluctantly, and only after much persuasion, Tagore let him have a look. Rothenstein loved the work and showed it to his friend, the world-famous William Butler Yeats. Yeats was enthralled and later wrote an introduction to the collection of poems when it was published in September, 1912, by the

India Society in London. The rest is history. Tagore was an instant sensation, first in London literary circles, and soon after that, around the world. Less than a year later, he received the Nobel Prize for literature. He was the first non-Westerner to be so honored. In 1915, he was knighted by the British King George V, but soon renounced this honor in protest when the British massacred 400 Indian demonstrators in Amritsar.

Today, Rabindranath Tagore is considered India's greatest literary figure. The variety, quality and quantity of his work is colossal. He wrote over one thousand poems; eight volumes of short stories; nearly two dozen plays; eight novels; and hundreds of essays on philosophy, religion, education and society. He also composed more than two thousand songs—both the music and the lyrics. Two of these became unofficial national anthems for India and Bangladesh. When this prolific maestro reached the ripe age of 70 and his friends assumed he would wind down in his sunset years, he took up oil painting, achieving critical acclaim all over again in yet another creative genre. At the age of 80, he passed away peacefully in the house of his birth.

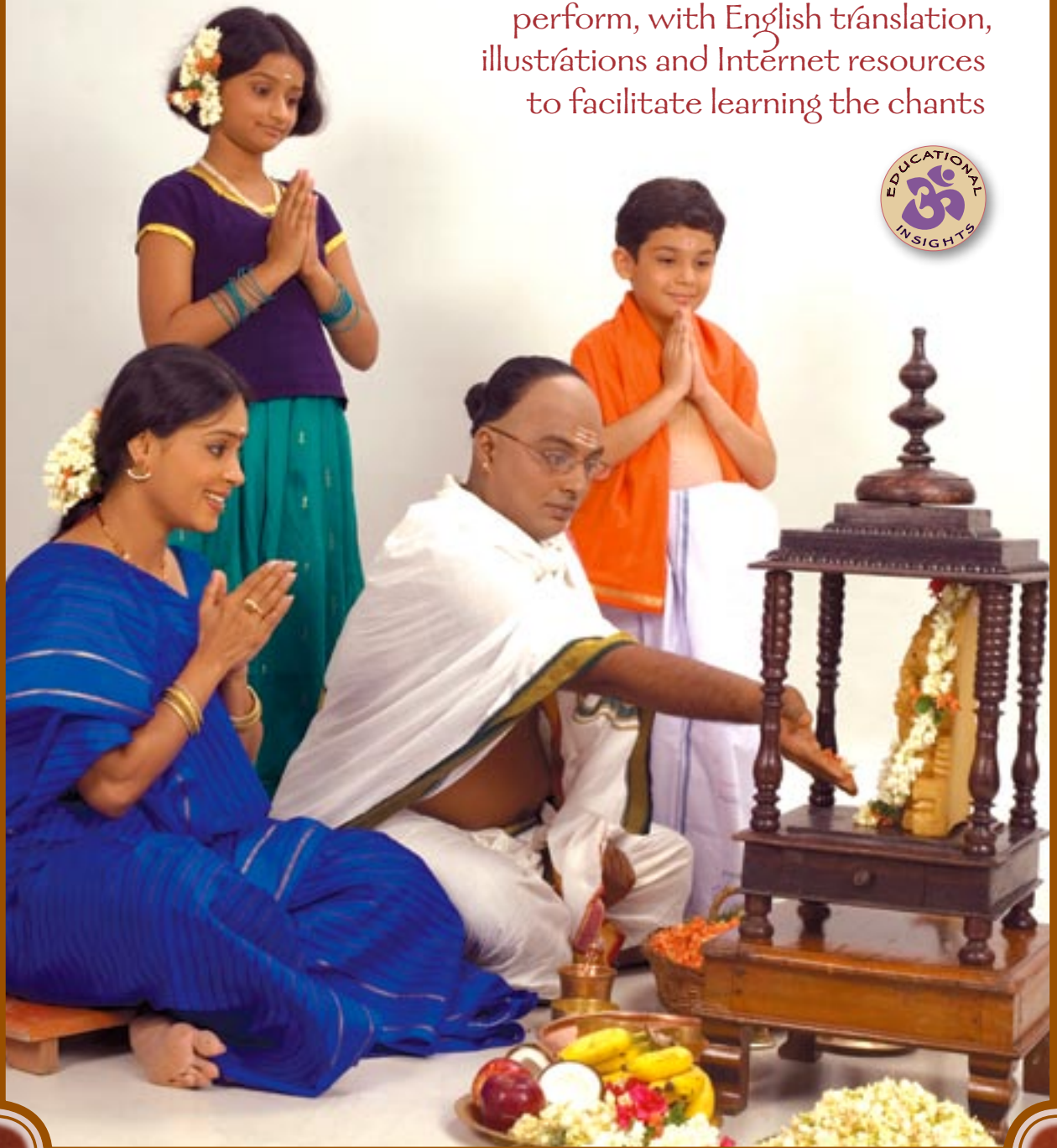


Tagore at age 21



# Home Puja

A simple, traditional worship ceremony to Lord Ganesha that anyone can perform, with English translation, illustrations and Internet resources to facilitate learning the chants





## INTRODUCTION TO GANESHA HOME PUJA

One could say that the Hindu form of home worship, known as puja, is unique in all the world. Quite fittingly, it arises from the magnanimous spirit of hospitality that Hindu people are famous for. All guests are received and treated as God in the Hindu home, and God is no exception. During this daily morning rite, family members gather in their well-appointed shrine room to honor God as their royal guest. They receive Him warmly, offer a seat, serve water to quench His thirst, bathe and dress Him in beautiful clothes, burn the finest incense for His enjoyment, honor Him with light and flowers and feed Him a sumptuous meal. It is an intimate, personal interaction with God. Throughout the puja, the officiant chants sweetly to the Deity in Sanskrit, describing these kindly acts and beseeching His blessings. Finally, he thanks the Deity for His presence, bids Him farewell and humbly apologizes for any errors he may have committed. It is a ritual performed daily in millions of homes. In a sense, each Hindu has a private temple right in the home, and invites God to abide there, close to the family. Mystically, it keeps open the channels to the superconscious, divine areas of the inner worlds, bringing peace, health, prosperity and happiness to family members. Intellectually, it keeps religious beliefs strong. Emotionally, it cultivates a burgeoning love of God, known as bhakti. ¶ Puja literally means “worship, adoration.” Home puja is a personal version of the public puja performed in temples by priests. The forms of puja vary widely between Hinduism’s four main denominations and its hundreds of lineages, but all puja finds its basis in sixteen offerings, *shodasha upachara*. These also vary somewhat, depending on the scriptural source that is followed, but one popular list is the following: 1) Āvāhanam, invoking; 2) Āsanam, offering a seat; 3) Pādyam, offering water for cleansing feet; 4) Argyam, offering water for cleansing the palms; 5) Āchamanīyam, sipping water; 6) Snānam, ceremonial bath; 7) Vastram, offering vestments; 8) Yajñopavītam, offering sacred thread; 9) Chandanam, offering sandalwood paste; 10) Pushpam, offering flowers; 11) Dhūpam, burning incense; 12) Dīpam, waving lighted camphor; 13) Naivedyam, offering food; 14) Añjali, praying with folded hands; 15) Pradakshinā, circumambulation; 16) Udvasanam, farewell. Lord Ganesha is the God honored and worshiped by all Hindus, so here we present a puja for this universally beloved, boon-giving Lord of Beginnings and Ruler of Obstacles, which can be performed by anyone, young and old, Hindu or non-Hindu, Vaishnava or Shakta, Saiva or Smarta. It is Lord Ganesha who bridges all distinctions and unifies all peoples, and it is through His worship that we ultimately come to know all the other Gods.

*Family members have donned traditional clothing and gathered in their shrine room for morning worship. They are just completing their preparations and are about to begin the daily ritual that keeps their home safe, harmonious and spiritually vibrant.*

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## PUJA INSTRUCTIONS

In performing the puja, preparation is of utmost importance—gathering flowers, cleaning the altar and puja tray, making ready the oil lamps and preparing the fruit and/or cooked food offering. It is common to chant a Ganesha mantra or softly sing devotional songs while performing these tasks. This quiets the mind and brings one’s awareness close to Him. Indeed, all this preparation is an integral part of worship.

As you see in the photos, there are a number of traditional implements needed for the puja, such as a metal tray, holy water cups and spoons, ghee lamp, camphor lamp, as well as puja supplies, like holy ash and sandal-

wood paste. These are now available at Indian grocery stores, and online at [www.minimela.com](http://www.minimela.com). If you need help with setting up an altar, one source of information is our four-page HINDUISM TODAY Educational Insight called “Hindu Home Sanctuary,” available at: [www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/pamphlets/homeshrine/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/pamphlets/homeshrine/)

Before beginning the puja, check the altar to make sure all necessary articles are there, so that you don’t have to interrupt the flow of puja to get a missing item. Arrange all the items the same way for each puja so you can reach automatically when needed, with those most frequently used closest at hand.

Hold the attitude that, as *pujari*, you are a servant of the Gods, a channel for the spiritual energies. Only thoughts of God are on your mind as you perform puja, thus enhancing the outpouring of divine blessings. Tradition provides a caution: you should never perform puja during or within 31 days of experiencing severe anger or other deep emotional upset, but it is all right to attend. Also,

puja is not performed or attended by women during their menses, or by anyone who has a wound that is bleeding. Puja is a yoga, or link, between this and inner worlds. Therefore, you must be at your best in mood and emotion to assist in making this connection. Before performing puja, you should be freshly dressed, clean and undistracted by daily concerns. Having bathed beforehand, enter the shrine room and prostrate.

The form of prostration differs for men and women. Men perform “eight-limbed obeisance,” *ashtanga pranama*, a fully prone pose in which hands, chest, forehead, knees and feet touch the ground. Women perform “five-limbed obeisance,” *panchanga pranama*, a kneeling pose in which hands, head and knees touch the ground (with ankles crossed, right over the left).

When everything is ready, take your seat in a cross-legged posture in front of and to the left of the altar, facing the Deity but turned slightly to the right. Close your eyes, sit quietly for a mo-





Unlike the puja we are presenting in this Insight, some home pujas are long and elaborate. Here a priest performs a long Siva puja in an Indian home shrine during Mahasivaratri. At left, he presents a ghee lamp to Siva, Shakti and Ganesha. At right, he ritually bathes the Deities with sandalwood paste.



Puja, the worship of a murti through water, lights and flowers in temples and shrines, is the Agamic counterpart of the Vedic yajna rite, in which offerings are conveyed through the sacred homa fire. These are the two great streams of adoration and communion in Hinduism, drawn from Hinduism's two massive compendiums of revealed scripture—the Vedas and the Agamas.

ment and tune your nerve system to God Ganesha and the sacred puja you are about to perform. If others are attending, be careful not to sit directly in front of the Deity, thereby blocking their view of the altar. Generally one remains seated throughout the ritual, though in some shrines it may be more comfortable to stand during the *arati* or throughout the puja. When small children are in the home, the shrine room is locked so they do not disturb the contents. If a lockable room is not available, the altar is raised so as to be out of reach, and the puja is performed standing up. Those attending will usually sit during most of the ceremony, then stand during the final *arati*. However, this again may be left to individual discretion in consideration of the height of the shrine.

During the ritual, you will be making many offerings. Most offerings are made with the right hand, never just the left, though there are occasions when both hands are used.

The offering of food is an important part of puja. Traditionally a simple dish of cooked rice is prepared especially for the Deity, with cooking utensils reserved for this purpose alone. If cooked food is not offered, then freshly cut fruit may be substituted. Keep the offering covered until the point in the puja when the *pranas* (life energies) of the food are offered to the Deity. Keeping the food covered helps to preserve purity and contain the *pranas*, which the Gods and devas can see, absorb, enjoy and reflect back to cleanse the auras of devotees. After the puja, the food offerings—along with holy ash (*vibhuti*), sacred water (*tirtha*), sandalwood paste (*chandana*), red powder (*kunkuma*) and flowers (*pushpa*)—are passed out and enjoyed as *prasada*.

A recording of sacred chanting from the *Vedas* may be played softly before the puja begins. At the high point, as the *arati* is presented, loud drums and *nagasvaras* resound. As the sacraments are passed out by the *pujari*, the divine musical ragas are heard softly played on the *vina*, or Vedic chanting or devotional songs may be played.

After the sacraments are passed out, encourage everyone to sit quietly for a while to enjoy the *sannidhya*, the ever-present feeling of the Divine, that the God, Gods, inner-plane gurus and devas suffuse in the shrine room. Such internalized worship naturally follows a puja. Those who perform daily *japa* will find this an ideal time for that *sadhana*.

Internalizing worship in this way gives you and all members of the family strength to face the outside world, its daily challenges and, yes, school tests. Internalizing worship is the core of the Sanatana Dharma. It is the root, stem and blossom of the highest chakra, the 1,000-petalled lotus. It is the force that gives the strength to resist temptation, to turn others from their bad ways and to face up to and live through birth karmas, *prarabdha* karmas, that are brought with you in this life. It gives the courage to resist making new, especially unwanted, karmas to be faced at a later date. It gives the willpower needed in this Kali Yuga to survive. It gives the love which provokes the understanding to overlook and forgive, then forget. Finally, internalized worship gives the peace of mind, the shanti, in which all saints, sages, mahatmas and great seers dwell, in their *jnana* of how things work in their universe of which we are a vital part.

Many people are hesitant to do puja, specific, traditional rites of worship, because they feel they don't have enough training or don't understand the mystical principles behind it well enough. Most Hindus depend on the priests to perform the pujas and sacraments for them, or to train them to perform home puja and give them permission to do so through initiation, called *diksha*. However, simple pujas, such as this one, may be performed by anyone wishing to invoke grace from God, Mahadevas and devas. Mothers, daughters, aunts, fathers, sons, uncles, all may perform puja within their own home, and do, as the Hindu home is considered to be nothing less than an extension of the nearby temple.

The Ganesha puja presented on the following pages consists of a series of Sanskrit chants to be intoned while performing the indicated actions and visualizations. Each chant is given in three forms, first in Sanskrit's traditional Devanagari script, second in transliterated for those who speak English, and third in a freely-rendered English translation. Each translation is followed by detailed instructions to guide the *pujari's* actions.

The chants of the simple Ganesha puja given here are in Sanskrit, Hinduism's ancient scriptural language. Time spent mastering the pronunciation is time well spent. Ideally, training is received personally from a priest, pundit or other person proficient in Sanskrit, so that you can chant the verses properly. Such a teacher will generally begin by teaching the alphabet and will offer training in reading in the Devanagari script, as well as the transliteration to help English-speaking students. Learning Sanskrit is not mandatory, and for those who do not have a teacher, we have a voice recording of this entire puja for learning the mantras properly. It is available at [www.himalayanacademy.com/audio/chants/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/audio/chants/). A key to Sanskrit pronunciation for the transliteration system used in this puja is available online at [www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/sanskrit/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/sanskrit/).

#### Devotion During Sacred Rituals

While correct chanting is important, the essential part of any puja is devotion. Without love of God and the Gods, outer performance is of little value. But with true devotion, even the simplest puja can be a profoundly sacred experience. Devotion is facilitated by the belief that you really are communing with the Divine through puja, that the Gods and devas do actually hear your prayers, enjoy your intonations and respond by sending blessings that purify your aura and protect your home. Though you can't see them with your physical eyes, they are there nonetheless. As you perform or attend puja, visualize the Deity sitting before you, accepting your offer-

ings, pleased to be in your company, delighted with your love and hospitality. Think of the God as a part of your family, a grand being who is concerned with your welfare. Through strong visualization and sincere devotion, your sensitivity to the darshan will grow and your relationship with the Deity will become strong and close.

Cultivating devotion is called bhakti yoga. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami stressed its importance in this way, "Bhakti yoga is love on all levels of consciousness—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The greatest inhibiting factor in practicing bhakti yoga is the doubting, cynical, intellectual mind. Doubt and skepticism harden the heart and narrow the mind. The bloom of bhakti softens the heart and relaxes the intellect. Through bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion, the combative mind becomes erased, absorbed into the consciousness of the One Self, the Being permeating all beings. With the help of devotion, you can soar within. You cannot only pull away detachedly from unwholesome areas of the mind, but it is possible to keep yourself in an inward state of expanded consciousness."

#### Use of the Shrine Room

Keep the shrine spotlessly clean, and decorate it for festivals and special holy days. Visit your shrine before you leave the home, seeking blessings and protection as you leave its shelter, and go there again for purification upon returning. Worship in heartfelt devotion, so the Gods' grace flows freely toward you and loved ones. Make the shrine a refuge for all family members, a haven where they can find peace and solace, where they can connect with the Gods, offer their praise and pray for practical needs. Train your children to worship in the shrine before each important event in life, such as a major exam at school or when faced with a personal challenge or problem.



## HOME PUJA PREPARATION & PURIFICATION

आचमनम्  
Āchamanam

Water Sipping  
By the Pūjāri



ॐ सुमुखाय स्वाहा  
ॐ एकदन्ताय स्वाहा  
ॐ गजकर्णकाय स्वाहा

Aum sumukhāya svāhā  
Aum ekadantāya svāhā  
Aum gajakarṇakāya svāhā

Aum! Hail to the God whose face is always shining!  
Aum! Hail to the God who has only one tusk!  
Aum! Hail to the God with huge elephant ears!

Holding the spoon with your left hand, take a spoonful of water from the cup and place it in the right palm to rinse the hand, letting the excess fall onto the floor or a tray. Put another spoonful of water into the right hand, intone “Aum sumukhāya svāhā” and sip the water. Repeat for the second and third lines, then rinse the right hand again.

विघ्नेश्वर प्रार्थना  
Vighneśvara Prārthanā

Ganeśa  
Invocation

ॐ शुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।  
प्रसन्न वदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

Aum śuklāambaradharam viṣṇum  
śaśivarṇam chaturbhujam  
prasanna vadanam dhyāyet  
sarvavighnopaśāntaye

Aum. O Lord dressed in splendid white, pervading the universe, shining radiantly like rays of the full moon, having four mighty arms and a charming, happy face, we meditate on you that all obstacles may be quelled.



Salute Lord Gaṇeśa by holding hands in añjali mudrā, the prayerful pose. Then, while reciting the verse, tap your temples lightly with your knuckles three times, as in the photo. Alternatively, you may cross your arms before your face, the left hand tapping the right temple and vice versa. Return your hands to añjali mudrā while reciting the last words of the chant.

**Five periods of the day (insert one in chant).**

उषः काल	ushaḥ kāla, dawn
प्रातः काल	prātaḥ kāla, morning
मध्याह्नकाल	madhyāhṇakāla, noon
सायंकाल	sāyaṅkāla, evening
ऊर्ध्व यामकाल	ūrdhva yāmakāla, night

Aum adya pūrvokta evaṅguṇasakala  
viśeṣeṇa viśiṣṭāyām asyām śubhatithau  
Aum Mahāgaṇeśvaram uddiśya  
Mahāgaṇeśvara prītyartham  
Mahāgaṇeśvara prasāda siddhyartham  
yathā śakti (chant city) deśe (insert the time of day)  
dhyānāvahanādi Gaṇeśa pūjām karishye  
Aum apa upasprīśya

संकल्पम्  
Sankalpam

Dedication of Pūjā,  
Statement of Purpose

ॐ अद्य पूर्वोक्त एवंगुणसकल  
विशेषेण विशिष्टायां अस्यां शुभतिथौ  
ॐ महागणेश्वरं उद्दिश्य महागणेश्वरप्रीत्यर्थं  
महागणेश्वरप्रसादसिद्ध्यर्थं  
यथा शक्ति (name of city) देशे (period of day)  
ध्यानावाहनादि गणेशपूजां करिष्ये ।  
ॐ अप उपस्पृश्य

At this particularly auspicious moment, time and place, on this auspicious day, so that we may realize the fullness of your grace, to the best of our ability this (insert time of day) Gaṇeśa pūjā we shall now perform. Aum. By touching pure water we become pure.

While reciting this statement of purpose, take a pinch of rice and hold it at chest height in your closed right palm, with open left hand underneath. Insert the time of day and the place where indicated. As you chant the last word, karishye, gently toss the rice toward the base of the image. Then, with



the left hand, place a spoonful of water into your right palm and ritually wash both hands with the water by wiping the palms together a few times as you recite “Aum apa upa sprīśya.” Once the saṅkalpam has been chanted, the pūjā must not be interrupted or abandoned until the concluding mantras are recited.

## WORSHIP AND OFFERINGS BEGIN

आवाहनम् आसनम्  
Āvāhanam, Āsanam

Welcoming and  
Offering a Seat

ध्यायामि । आवाहयामि ।  
रत्नसिंहासनं समर्पयामि ।

dhyāyāmi, āvāhayāmi, ratnasinhāsanaṁ samarpayāmi

We now meditate on you, O Lord, and invite you to sit upon the jewel-studded, lion throne we have prepared for you.



Offer a pinch of rice to the Deity as you chant each of the three words before “samarpayāmi.” Visualize Gaṇeśa seated on a gem-studded throne before you, smiling, full of blessings, waiting to be honored as a guest in your home.

अर्घ्यम्  
Arghyam

Washing the Lord's  
Feet and Hands

पादयोः पादं समर्पयामि ।  
हस्तयोः अर्घ्यं समर्पयामि ।

pādayoḥ pādyam samarpayāmi  
hastayoḥ arghyam samarpayāmi

We now humbly bathe each of your white lotus feet and gently wash each of your precious hands, Lord Gaṇeśa.

With your right hand offer a spoonful of pure water by holding it up before the Deity momentarily and then placing it in the tirtha cup. This is how all water offering is done throughout the pūjā. As you chant the first line, visualize yourself bathing the feet of Gaṇeśa. Offer a second spoonful of pure water as you intone the next line and visualize yourself washing His hands.

आचमनम्  
Āchamanam

Offering Water to  
Quench His Thirst

ॐ भूर्भुवः सुवः आचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।

Aum bhūr-bhuvaḥ suvaḥ āchamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi

Aum! In all three worlds, we humbly offer you fresh, pure water for sipping.



Offer a spoonful of pure water to Gaṇeśa. Visualize His accepting it in His Hand and sipping it.



## स्नानम् Snānam

## Ritual Bathing

ॐ सुरसिन्धुसमानीतं सुवर्णकलशस्थितम् ।  
स्नानार्थं गृह्यतां शम्भो सलिलं विमलं गणेश ॥  
गङ्गास्नानं समर्पयामि

Aum surasindhu samānītam suvarṇakalāśāsthitam ।  
snānārthaṁ grīhyatām śambho salilam vimalam gaṇeśa ॥  
gaṅgāsnānam samarpayāmi

We now bathe you, beloved Lord Gaṇeśa, the pure one,  
with the water that was brought from the Ganges in the  
golden pot. We have bathed you in sacred Gaṅgā water.

While ringing the bell  
and reciting this verse,  
dip a flower into the  
tirtha water and gently  
sprinkle the Deity.  
Do this three times or  
more. Hold the flower  
in your right hand in  
the mṛigī mudrā, the  
stem between your third  
and fourth fingers.  
If the altar design  
allows, you may pour  
water over the mūrti,  
rather than sprinkling  
it during this chant.



## अलङ्कारम् Alaṅkāram

## Adornment and Offerings

वस्त्रार्थं मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि  
उपवीतार्थं मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि  
ॐ गन्धं गृहाण सुरभिमन्धकासुरसूदन ।  
कुङ्कुमदिसमायुक्तं कुलाचलनिकेतन ॥  
दिव्य परिमल विभूति चन्दन कुङ्कुमम् समर्पयामि

vastrārtham maṅgalākshatān samarpayāmi  
upavītārtham maṅgalākshatān samarpayāmi

Aum gandhaṁ grīhāṇa surabhim andhakā surasūdana,  
kuṅkumadi samāyuktaṁ kulāchalaniketana  
divya parimala vibhūti chandana  
kuṅkumam samarpayāmi

We give you this auspicious unbroken rice, our  
magnificent Lord, that you may enjoy resplendent  
clothing. We give you auspicious unbroken rice,  
Lord Gaṇeśa, that you may be handsomely adorned  
with a white, cotton sacred thread. Aum. O Lord, the  
destroyer of the demon Andhakāsura, you who resides  
in the Himalayas, please accept the good smelling  
chandana with kuṅkuma and choice offerings.

*Dress the Deity. Offer a pinch of unbroken rice while chant-  
ing each of the first two lines. Repeat the third and fourth  
lines over and over as you decorate the Deity with flowers.  
The last line is recited once while applying vibhūti (holy  
ash), chandana (sandalpaste) and kuṅkuma. (red powder).*



## पुष्पम् Pushpam

## Offering Flowers

तदुपरि मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।  
पूजार्थं नानाविधपत्र पुष्पाणि समर्पयामि ।

tadupari maṅgalākshatān samarpayāmi  
pūjārtham nānāvidhapatra pushpāṇi samarpayāmi

We now offer this auspicious unbroken rice. And for  
the fulfillment of our devotion, we offer many kinds  
of fresh, blooming flowers, our peerless Lord.

*A pinch of rice is offered with the first line. A  
handful of flowers is offered with the second.*



## धूपम् Dhūpam

## Offering Incense

ॐ वनस्पत्युद्भवैः दिव्यैः नानागन्धसमन्वितैः ।  
आघ्रेयधूपदीपानां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥  
दशाङ्गं गुग्गुलोपेतं सुगन्धं सुमनोहरम् ।  
आघ्रेयःसर्वदेवानां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥  
धूपमाघ्रापयामि धूपानन्तरमाचमनीयं समर्पयामि  
मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि

Aum vanaspatyudbhavaiḥ divyaiḥ  
nānāgandhasamanvitaiḥ,  
āghreyadhūpadīpānām dhūpo-yam pratigrihyatām.  
daśāṅgam guggulopetam sugandhan sumanoharam,  
āghreyaḥ sarvadevānām dhūpo-yam pratigrihyatām.  
dhūpamāghrāpayāmi  
dhūpānantaram āchamaniyam samarpayāmi  
maṅgalākshatān samarpayāmi

The finest incense, of magical qualities, of full and varied  
fragrances, Lord Gaṇeśa, we set aflame and offer to you in  
this, our home. Incense of the finest resins and perfumes,  
incomparable in sweetness and aroma, to be inhaled and  
enjoyed by you and all the Gods and devas, we offer to you  
in this, our home. Eagerly we offer to you, our resplendent  
Lord, fine resin incense, of heavenly odor, bewitching  
to the mind, rising out of a ghee-fed flame. We offer it  
to you in this, our home. This fine incense we have duly



offered for your pleasure. And we again offer you cool,  
sweet water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

*During this chant, make three circles before the Deity with  
lighted incense held in your right hand while ringing the bell  
with your left hand. Complete the third circle and trace an  
Aum as you chant the fifth line, dhūpamāghrāpayāmi. At  
that point raise the incense higher and ring the bell louder.  
Put the incense down, and recite the next two lines. With  
the first, water is offered, with the second, a pinch of rice.*



## दीपम् Dipam

## Offering The Light

ॐ साज्यवर्तित्रयोपेतं प्राज्यमङ्गलदायकं ।  
दीपं पश्य दयाराशे दीनबन्धो नमोऽस्तु ते ॥  
ॐ आवाहिताभ्यः सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो नमः ।  
दिव्य मङ्गलदीपं सन्दर्शयामि ।  
दीपानन्तरमाचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।  
मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।

aum sājyavarti trayopetam prājyamaṅgala dāyakam,  
dipam paśya dayārāśe dīnabandho namo-stu te.  
aum āvāhitabhyaḥ sarvabhyo devatabhyo namaḥ,  
divya maṅgala dīpaṁ sandarśayāmi,  
dīpānantaramāchamaniyaṁ samarpayāmi,  
maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi

O the Compassionate, the friend of devotees! See this  
lamp offered which is lighted with *ghee* and three wicks  
and which is the provider of abundant auspiciousness.

ALL PHOTOS BY DINODIA



Salutations to you!  
Aum! Salutations to all the Gods invoked! This divine,  
auspicious light we offer to you. After that, we offer you  
pure water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

Offer the oil light to Lord Gaṇeśa and ring the bell as  
you chant this hymn. As with the incense, circle three  
times then draw the Aum with the flame. Then raise  
the flame and ring the bell louder, then stop ringing.  
Offer water, then a flower or a pinch of rice.

## नैवेद्यम् Naivedyam

## Offering Food

सत्यं त्वर्तेन (chant in morning)  
ऋतं त्वा सत्येन (chant if evening) परिषिञ्चामि ।  
ॐ अमृतमस्तु अमृतोपस्तरणमसि स्वाहा ।  
ॐ गणेशाय स्वाहा । ॐ गणेशाय स्वाहा ।  
ॐ गणेशाय स्वाहा ।

satyaṁ tvartena (chant if in morning)  
ṛitaṁ tvā satyena (if evening) parishiñchāmi  
Aum amṛitamastu amṛitopastaraṇamasi svāhā  
Aum gaṇeśāya svāhā, Aum gaṇeśāya svāhā,  
Aum gaṇeśāya svāhā

We add Truth to Truth. Aum. May this sweet  
and pungent food be transformed into nectar.  
We humbly offer to you this food.

While reciting the first part of the mantra, uncover the  
food offering. Then, while chanting the last line and

ringing the bell, circle a spoonful of water over the food  
and offer it to the Deity. While ringing the bell softly,  
gently waft the aroma and vital essences of the food or  
fruit toward the Deity. Do this by sweeping the right  
hand over the food with a flower held between your  
fingers, stem upward. The palm is facing downward as  
it moves over the food, then rotates upward as the sweep  
approaches the Deity, bringing the aroma and prāṇa  
toward His nose and mouth. As you complete the third  
line, gently toss the flower toward the feet of the Deity  
at the end of the sweep with all the love in your heart.



ॐ आवाहिताभ्यः सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो नमः ।  
नानाविधमहानैवेद्यं निवेदयामि ।  
यथाशक्तिसमर्पितमहानैवेद्यम् कृपया स्वीकुरु ।

Aum āvāhitābhyaḥ sarvābhyo devatābhyo namaḥ,  
nānā vidha mahānaivedyaṁ nivedayāmi,  
yathāśakti samarpita mahānaivedyam kṛipayā svikuru

Aum! Salutations to all the Gods invoked! Because  
we are offering you our very best, Lord Gaṇeśa, in all  
sincerity and love, please consider the essence of this  
food as among the finest meals you have ever received.  
To the best of our ability in the worship of you, we offer  
this food and humbly beg that you will receive it.

## विघ्नेश्वराष्टोत्तर शतनामावलिः

## Vighneśvarāṣṭottara Śatanāmāvaliḥ

## Chanting Gaṇeśa's 108 Names

In this section of the pūjā, chant the “garland of  
Gaṇeśa’s 108 names.” As you intone each name, of-  
fer with your right hand a flower, some flower pet-  
als or a pinch of rice. The names are attributes of the  
Deity, each delineating an aspect of His wondrous  
nature. Each name is preceded by the mantra Aum  
and followed by namaḥ, meaning “obeisance, adora-  
tion or homage to.” Thus the first line is chanted Aum  
Vināyakāya Namaḥ (pronounced, “na-ma-ha”).

## विनायकाय

## विघ्नराजाय

## गौरीपुत्राय

## गणेश्वराय

## स्कन्दाग्रजाय

## अव्ययाय

## पूताय

## दक्षाय

## अध्यक्षाय

## द्विजप्रियाय

## अग्निगर्वच्छिदे

## इन्द्रश्रीप्रदाय

## वाणीप्रदाय

## अव्ययाय

## सर्वसिद्धिप्रदाय

## सर्वतनयाय

## शर्वरीप्रियाय

Vināyakāya ..... the remover (of obstacles)

Vighnarājāya ..... the ruler of obstacles

Gauriputrāya ..... the son of Gaurī

Gaṇeśvarāya ..... the lord of categories

Skandāgrajāya ..... Skanda’s elder brother

Avyayāya ..... the inexhaustible one

Pūtāya ..... the pure one

Dakshāya ..... the dexterous one

Adhyakshāya ..... the great presider

Dvijapriyāya .... who loves the twice-born

Agnigarvacchide . . who destroyed fire’s ego

Indraśripradāya who restored Indra’s wealth

Vāṇipradāya ..... who gives eloquence

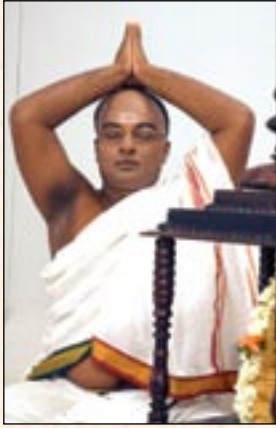
Avyayāya ..... the inexhaustible one

Sarvasiddhipradāya . . giver of fulfillment

Sarvatanayāya ..... the son of Śiva

Śarvaripriyāya ..... loved by Pārvatī

Ring the bell loudly as you recite  
the above chant, pick up a flower or  
a pinch of rice and hold it at chest  
height in the fingertips of the right  
hand. As the last word is spoken,  
gently release the rice or flower  
at the feet of the Deity. Then put  
down the bell and raise your hands  
above your head in devout prayer  
that Gaṇeśa will accept the meal.  
While your hands are raised, close  
your eyes and visualize Gaṇeśa ac-  
cepting and partaking of the meal.  
After a moment, lower your  
hands and intone Aum quietly.



Sarvātmakāya ..... the soul of all

Śṛiṣṭīkartre ..... the creator

Devāya ..... the resplendent one

Anekārchitāya . . . worshiped by multitudes

Śivāya ..... the auspicious one

Śuddhāya ..... the pure one

Buddhipriyāya ..... who loves intelligence

Śāntāya ..... the peaceful one

Brahmachāriṇe ..... the celibate one

Gajānanāya ..... the elephant’s faced

Dvaimāturāya ..... who has two mothers

Munistutāya ..... who is praised by sages

Bhaktavighna vināśanāya  
..... who destroys devotees’ obstacles

Ekadantāya ..... who has one tusk

Chaturbāhave ..... who has four arms

Chaturāya ..... the ingenious one



शक्तिसंयुताय लंबोदराय शूर्पकर्णाय हरये ब्रह्मविदुत्तमाय कालाय ग्रहपतये कामिने सोमसूर्याग्नि लोचनाय पाशाङ्कुश धराय चण्डाय गुणातीताय निरञ्जनाय अकल्मषाय स्वयंसिद्धाय सिद्धार्चित पदाम्बुजाय बीजपूर फलासक्ताय वरदाय शाश्वताय कृतिने द्विजप्रियाय वीतभयाय गदिने चक्रिणे इक्षुचापधृते	Śaktisaṁyutāya ..... united with power Lambodarāya ..... who has a large belly Śūrpakarṇāya ..... with fan-like ears Haraye ... destroys evil with lion-like courage Brahmaviduttamāya foremost knower of God Kālāya ..... the master of destiny Grahapataye ..... lord of planets Kāmine ..... who is love Somasūryāgni lochanāya ..... whose eyes are the moon, sun and fire Pāśaṅkuśa dharāya ..... who holds a noose and a goad Chaṇḍāya ..... who is fierce-looking Guṇātītāya ..... who transcends qualities Nirañjanāya ..... who is without blemish Akalmashāya ... who is without impurity Svayamsiddhāya .... self-fulfilled, perfect Siddhārchita padāmbujāya ..... whose lotus feet sages worship Bijapūraphalāsaktāya ..... who is fond of pomegranates Varadāya ..... the boon giver Śaśvatāya ..... the eternal, unchanging one Kṛtine ..... the skillful one Dvijapriyāya ..... fond of the twice-born Vītabhayāya ..... who is fearless Gadine ..... who wields the mace Chakriṇe ..... who wields a discus Ikshuchāpadhṛite ..... who holds a sugarcane bow	कुलाद्रिभृते  जटिलाय कलिकल्मष नाशनाय चन्द्रचूडामणये  कान्ताय पापहारिणे समाहिताय आश्रिताय श्रीकराय सौम्याय भक्तवाञ्छित दायकाय शान्ताय कैवल्य सुखदाय सच्चिदानन्द विग्रहाय ज्ञानिने दयायुताय दान्ताय ब्रह्मद्वेष विवर्जिताय प्रमत्तदैत्य भयदाय श्रीकण्ठाय विबुधेश्वराय रामार्चिताय विधये नागराज यज्ञोपवीतवते स्थूलकण्ठाय स्वयं कर्त्रे सामघोषप्रियाय	Kulādrībhṛite who supports Himālaya, His family's mountain Jaṭilāya ..... who has matted hair Kalikalmasha nāśanāya ..... the destroyer of sins in the Kaliyuga Chandrachūdāmaṇaye ..... who wears a moon upon his head Kāntāya ..... the beloved, loving one Pāpahāriṇe ..... the consumer of sins Samāhitāya ..... absorbed in meditation Āśritāya ..... who is our refuge Śrikarāya ..... who manifests prosperity Saumyāya ..... the amiable one Bhaktavañchita dāyakāya ..... the grantor of devotees' desires Śāntāya ..... the peaceful one Kaivalya sukhadāya ..... bestower of unsullied liberation Sacchidānanda vighrahāya ..... embodiment of existence-knowledge-bliss Jñānine ..... the great wisdom Dayāyutāya ..... full of compassion Dāntāya ..... who has self-control Brahmadvesha vivarjitāya ..... who is free from aversion to knowledge Pramattadaitya bhayadāya ..... who brings terror to demons Śrikanṭhāya ..... with beautiful throat Vibudheśvarāya ..... Lord of the Wise Rāmārchitāya ..... worshiped by Rāma Vidhaye ..... who is the destiny of all Nāgarāja yajñopavītavate ..... whose sacred thread is a king cobra Sthūlakanṭhāya ..... of stout neck Svayamīkartre ..... who is self-created Sāmaghoshapriyāya ..... who loves the sound of Sāma Veda	परस्मै स्थूलतुण्डाय अग्रण्ये धीराय वागीशाय सिद्धिदायकाय दूर्वाबिल्व प्रियाय अव्यक्तमूर्तये  अद्भुतमूर्तिमते शैलेन्द्रतनुजोत्सङ्ग खेलनोत्सुकमानसाय Śailendratanu-jotsaṅga khelanotsukamānasāya who is happy to play in the lap of His mother, Pārvatī, daughter of the mountain Lord	Parasmai ..... who is supreme Sthūlatuṇḍāya .... who has a stout trunk Agraṇye ..... the leader Dhirāya ..... the courageous one Vāgīśāya ..... the Lord of speech Siddhidāyakāya ... bestower of fulfillment Dūrvābilva priyāya ..... who loves dūrvā grass and bilva leaves Avyaktamūrtaye ..... the manifestation of the Unmanifest Adbhutamūrtimate ... of wondrous form	स्वलावण्यसुधासारजित मन्मथविग्रहाय Svalāvaṇyasudhāsārajita manmathavighrahāya ... who defeated Manmatha, the God of love, by His sweet beauty  समस्त जगदाधाराय मायिने मूषिकवाहनाय हृष्टाय तुष्टाय प्रसन्नात्मने सर्वसिद्धि प्रदायकाय Samasta jagadādhārāya ..... the supporter of all the worlds Māyine ..... the source of illusory power Mūshikavāhanāya .. who rides the mouse Hṛishṭāya ..... the joyful one Tusṭāya ..... the contented one Prasannātmane the bright kindly-souled one Sarvasiddhi pradāyakāya ..... the grantor of all fulfillment
				<div>मन्त्र पुष्पम् Mantra Pushpam</div> <div>Worship With Flowers</div>		
				<p>ॐ योऽपां पुष्पं वेदं । पुष्पवान् प्रजावान् पशुमान् भवति । चन्द्रमावा अपां पुष्पम् । पुष्पवान् प्रजावान् पशुमान् भवति । य एवं वेदं । योऽपामायतनं वेदं । आयतनवान् भवति ॥ ॐ श्री महागणेश्वराय नमः मन्त्रपुष्पाञ्जलिं समर्पयामि ।</p>		<p>The one who understands the beauty of the blooming powers of the Supreme Being is blessed with beautiful, blooming life, progeny and cattle. The moon is certainly the bloom of those powers. One who realizes the qualities of the moon, which are nothing but the blooming divine powers, is blessed with a blooming, beautiful life of perfection, progeny and cattle. One who realizes this principle and realizes the source from whom all these powers have come himself becomes the abode of those divine powers. Aum, salutations, Lord Mahāgaṇeśa, we respectfully offer you this flower mantra.</p>
				<p>Aum yō-pām pushpam veda, pushpāvaṁ prajāvān paśumān bhavati, chandramāva apām pushpam, pushpāvaṁ prajāvān paśumān bhavati, ya evaṁ veda, yō-pāmāyatanaṁ veda, āyatānavān bhavati.</p>		<p>While chanting this mantra, hold a handful of flowers before you in añjali mudrā, hands cupped loosely around the flowers at chest height. Recite the verses with adoration. As you intone the last word, samarpayāmi, lower your hands (as shown in the photo) and toss the flowers into the air above the murti, sending a shower of blossoms upon the God with feelings of gratitude and loving devotion.</p>
				<p>Aum Śrī Mahāgaṇeśvarāya namaḥ mantra pushpāñjaliṁ samarpayāmi</p>		



## आरती Āratī

## Worship With Flame

ॐ साज्यं त्रिवर्तिसंयुक्तं वह्निना योजितं मया ।  
गृहाण मङ्गलारतिं ईशपुत्र नमोऽस्तु ते ॥  
ॐ आवाहिताभ्यः सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो नमः ।  
दिव्यमङ्गलदीपं सन्दर्शयामि ।  
आचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।  
मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।

aum sājyam trivartisaṁyuktam vahninā yojitam mayā,  
grihāṇa maṅgalāratim īśa putra namo-stu te.  
aum āvāhitābhyaḥ sarvābhyo devatābhyo namaḥ  
divya maṅgaladīpaṁ sandarśayāmi  
āchamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi  
maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi

O Gaṇapati, Son of God Śiva, please accept this auspicious *āratī* prepared by me with *ghee*, three wicks and fire. My salutations to you! Aum! Salutations to all the Gods invoked! This divine, auspicious light we offer to you. After that, we offer you pure water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

During this chant, hold the lit oil lamp or camphor burner in your right hand and the bell in your left. While ringing the bell and slowly reciting the *āratī* mantra, make three circles clockwise before Gaṇeśa with the flame. Stop at the top of the third circle, lower the lamp slightly and trace the symbol of Aum in Sanskrit or in your native language.

## रक्षधारणम् Rakshadhāraṇam

## Prayer for Protection

इन्द्र स्तोमैनपञ्चदशेन  
मध्यमिदं वातेन सगरैण  
रक्ष रक्षां धारयामि ।

indra-stomēna pañchadaśeṇa  
madhyamidaṁ vāteṇa sagarēṇa  
raksha rakṣāṁ dhārayāmi

O Indra, Lord of material and spiritual prosperity, please protect the space between the heavens and earth as well as the mind between the body and the soul with the help of fifteen noble powers and virtues (five *prāṇas*, five *jñānendriyas* and five *karmendriyas*). Your protection and blessings sustain me.

As you recite this mantra, make three circles above the burning flame with a flower held in the right hand, stem upward (photo next page). With the last words, toss the flower gently toward the Deity and place your hands in *añjali mudrā* while facing the altar. Now offer the flame at chest level to all present, allowing each to draw both hands through it and lightly touch the eyes three times (photo next page, upper right). The Gods and devas can see us



ALL PHOTOS BY DINODIA

Then lift the flame slightly above the Aum that you placed in the *ākāśic* ether and ring the bell louder for all three worlds to hear. Keep ringing loudly while chanting the above two-line salutation to the devas (“*āvāhitābhyaḥ ... sandarśayāmi*”). Put down the bell and the lamp and then, with the flame still burning, offer a spoonful of water with “*āchamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi*,” then a pinch of rice with “*maṅgalāṣhatān samarpayāmi*.”



through the flame and send blessings. If especially honored persons are present, such as one's guru, parents or teacher, take the flame first to them. Then proceed clockwise to the others. In some cases, the *pūjārī* may stand near the altar while devotees come forward to receive the flame. If no one is attending the *pūjā*, you may personally draw blessings from the flame, but not otherwise. Finally, present the flame once more to the Deity, then extinguish it with a wave of the right hand or by snuffing it out with a flower.



## अर्पणम् Arpaṇam

## Final Consecration

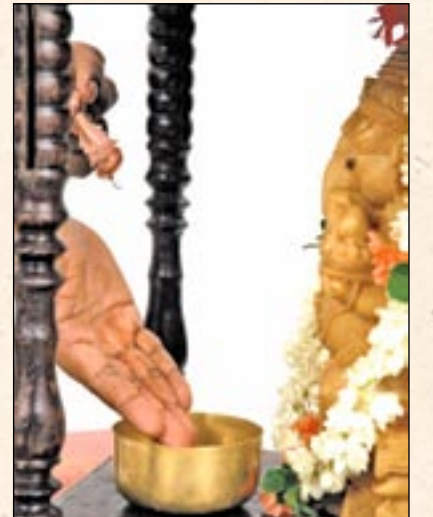
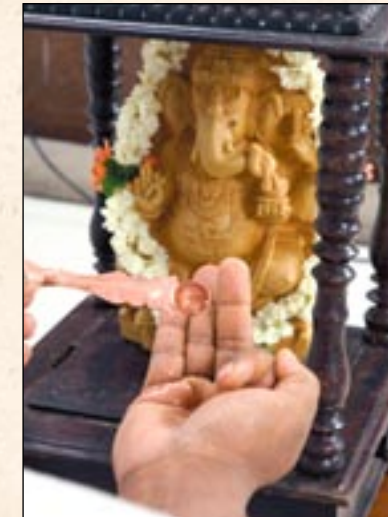
अनया यथा शक्ति कृत  
(state period of day)

पूजया भगवान् सर्व देवात्मकः  
श्री महागणेश्वराः सुप्रीतः  
सुप्रसन्नो वरदो भवतु

anayā yathā śakti kṛita  
(state period of day from list on page I-4)  
pūjayā bhagavān sarva devātmakaḥ  
śrī mahāgaṇeśvaraḥ suprītaḥ  
suprasanno varado bhavatu

To the best of our ability we have performed this (state time of day) *pūjā* and worshiped you, dear Lord, the brightest of all the Gods. May it please you. May it be enjoyed by you. Surrounded by your presence, we place ourselves in your care, loving Gaṇeśa.

Before reciting the above verse, place a pinch of rice in your left palm, then transfer it to the right palm. Add to the rice three spoonfuls of water and close the hand (left photo). Hold the rice before you as you face the Deity, the left hand under the right hand, and recite the mantra. As you intone the last words, let the rice and water fall into the *tīrtha* cup (right photo). The sacraments may then be given out in the following order: holy ash, blessed water, sandalpaste, red powder, food and flowers. If no one is attending the *pūjā*, you may partake of the sacraments yourself, but not otherwise. If many devotees are attending, a second person may help pass out the sacraments, except for the holy ash, which is always given by the person who performed the *pūjā*.







THOMAS KELLEY

*Sharing the blessed offerings: at left holy ash is distributed, a small pinch into the right hand of each devotee; at right, the father of this household applies the sacred dot on his daughter's forehead.*

*Below, the family offers final prayers at the conclusion of their morning puja.*



DINODIA

## विसर्जनम् Visarjanam

## Farewell and Apologies

ॐ आवाहनं न जानामि न जानामि विसर्जनम् ।  
पूजाञ्चैव न जानामि क्षम्यतां परमेश्वर ॥  
मन्त्रहीनं क्रियाहीनम् भक्तिहीनं सुरेश्वर ।  
यत् पूजितं मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु ते ।  
अन्यथा शरणम् नास्ति त्वमेव शरणम् मम ।  
तस्मात् कारुण्यभावेन रक्ष रक्ष गणेश्वर ॥  
ॐ तत् सत् ॐ

Aum āvāhanam na jānāmi na jānāmi visarjanam,  
pūjāñchaiva na jānāmi kshamyatām parameśvara.  
mantrahīnam kriyāhīnam bhaktihīnam sureśvara,  
yat pūjitam mayā deva paripūrṇam tadastu te,  
anyathā śaraṇam nāsti tvameva śaraṇam mama,  
tasmāt kāruṇyabhāvena raksha raksha gaṇeśvara.  
Aum tat sat Aum.

O Lord, we do not know the proper means of inviting you or, when taking our leave, how to wish you farewell. A full knowledge of priestly rites has not been imparted to us, so you must overlook and forgive any mistakes or omissions. We know little of mantras or pious conduct, and we are strangers to true bhakti. Nonetheless, please forgive us and regard our attempts as exact and complete—because you are our only refuge. With your compassionate nature, Lord Gaṇeśa, we beseech you, please protect those who pray. That which is Truth is Aum.



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*This concluding apology is recited with hands in añjali mudrā. It is a formal and devout end to the worship service. As the final words, “Aum tat sat Aum,” are spoken, it is customary to clap your hands together three times. All may now prostrate.*

*It is traditional and most uplifting to meditate for a few minutes after the pūjā, rather than rushing off to daily duties. There is great personal benefit in such internalized worship, eyes closed, mind still, following, deep within yourself, the prāṇas that the pūjā has created. Externalized worship is the bhakti path; internalized worship is the yoga path. Both together make the complete circle that sustains devotees in their spiritual life, making them strong and kindly in moving the forces of the world in their daily life. This dual-pronged effort towards self-transformation and right living is the very foundation for the final goal of all seekers: moksha, freedom from rebirth.*



# Tobacco's Deadly Grip

If you smoke, quit. All it takes is an unequivocal decision to do it and faith that it can be done.

BY DEVANANDA TANDAVAN, M.D.

**L**ET NO ONE BE FOOLED! TOBACCO SMOKING IS directly related to human diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis and many other maladies. There is probably no physician in the United States who is not convinced of this.

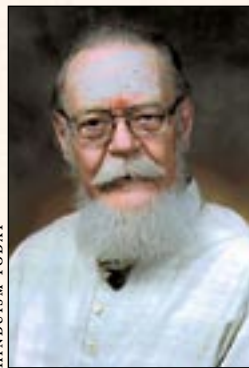
Directly inhaled smoking is called "mainstream" smoking. Inhalation of the smoke indirectly is called "sidestream" or "passive" smoking. Recent studies at the University of Utah show that women subjected to passive smoking for three hours a day were three times more likely to develop cancer of the cervix of the uterus than women who had no exposure to smoking at all. This was even more evident in women over 40 years of age.

Dr. A. Wesley Horton, researcher at Oregon Health Science University, has discovered a relationship between breast cancer and "passive" smoking. He also found that countries with high rates of lung cancer in men have high rates of breast cancer in non-smoking women.

Smoking is one of man's strongest addictions. It is a difficult habit to stop, because of its many aspects: the repetitive motion of the arm and hand, the oral satisfaction and the addiction of the nicotine itself. Then there are the social causes of the problem, the implied "macho" image for men and "liberated woman" image for women. All of this grows insidiously as a habit. I know, because I once smoked.

The smoker who develops lung cancer always dies, and it is a most horrible death. Every smoker develops some degree of emphysema and bronchitis. Emphysema results from the loss of the tissues that make up the walls of the small air sacs of the lung. A healthy lung has thousands of these small air sacs. The smoker is eventually left with only a few large sacs, making it impossible to breathe adequately. The small tubes that connect these sacs become chronically inflamed and produce the well-known "smoker's cough." It is not unusual to see smokers struggling for breath, even to the point of needing constant oxygen. Even then, they cough so much their voice changes. The marked decrease in the absorption of *prana* weakens the entire body and spirit. This is especially detrimental for anyone following the spiritual path. In the practice of yoga and meditation, breath and *pranayama* (breath control) are of essential importance.

Smoking is addictive primarily because of a chemical dependency that occurs due to the nicotine content of tobacco. There are many substances added to the tobacco to make it more palatable and to exaggerate its basic oral pleasure. Also, smokers derive enjoyment from the ritual of smoking—reaching for a cigarette, tapping it to pack the tobacco, fumbling for matches or a lighter and finally lighting the tip of the cigarette so that it bursts into a smoldering flame that transforms into inhaled smoke. The smoker watches the smoke curl upward and perhaps blows smoke-rings. After a short time, the muscles get used to this ritual and the habit mind becomes comfortable with the



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routine. Soon enough, smoking becomes a tool for dealing with anxiety, uneasiness or emotional disturbance.

To better understand how this works, let us consider the subconscious portion of our mind. It is the animal-like part of ourselves that behaves much like a child. It wants what it wants, when it wants it, and it will act up unless its desires are satisfied. Consider a three-year-old child's behavior. He is like your subconscious mind, which makes no judgments and acts only as programmed. This subconscious mind makes giving up smoking very difficult.

We can clearly see that the first thing we need to do in order to give up the habit of smoking is to consciously decide to quit. This must be an unequivocal decision. The use of a Nicotine Patch is not advised, for this is an equivocation. Withdrawal symptoms will not be a problem if the subconscious is clearly impressed with the new program. A firm act of the will is the most decisive and effective tool.

The technique of "shouting it out" may help to convince the subconscious mind that a change is really wanted. Whenever you are alone (even driving a car),

you can shout, "I have stopped smoking." Say it so loudly that the subconscious cannot help but hear and be convinced. If this is done several times a day, the message gets through. This technique also works to overcome other habits.

I advocate stopping all at once—"cold turkey." It may help to set a goal in time so that, when that time comes and the goal has been successfully achieved, the instinctive nature can be rewarded with something special that it enjoys, like an outing or a taste-treat of some sort. The key is to live with confidence, as if this goal of stopping has already been accomplished in its fullness for all time. The message to the subconscious must always be "I have stopped smoking," not "I am stopping," or "I will stop."

A new habit ritual may be formulated to replace the old one, such as a program of regimented daily exercise, reading or meditation. This will help make the transition positive. It also assures continued success. Beware! In my own case, I had stopped smoking for three years but was again hooked when someone handed me a lit cigarette while my mind was occupied with a floor show. Unconsciously, I took a drag. There I was, right back at the beginning. I had to repeat the entire process all over again. Of course, it did not take long the second time around.

If you are a smoker, you should feel responsible to inform yourself of the real and unrelenting effects of this life-threatening habit. If necessary, obtain professional help in stopping. Realize that the on-going lack of health from smoking is even worse than a possible early death. It makes no difference how long one has smoked; quitters always win. It is a well-known fact that, even if one has smoked for many years and has developed heart disease and lung problems, dramatic benefits can be gained by quitting. If we realize the deadly effects of this habit, can we not give it up? For more information on the health risks of smoking, go to [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

The late DR. TANDAVAN was a nuclear physician and hospital staff president who specialized in alternative healing arts. His medical editorials were featured in HINDUISM TODAY from 1988 to 1998.



## 20 million Hindus worship Goddess Durga in Nepal

BY WILLIAM FORBES, KATHMANDU

**W**ARM, SUNNY DAYS WITH BILLOWY cloudscapes and kite-flying breezes melt into the first chills of winter as most of Nepal's twenty million Hindus prepare for Dashain, the region's longest and most auspicious religious festival. This fifteen-day celebration takes place during the month of Kartik on the Bikram Sambat calendar (late September and early October) during a bright lunar fortnight ending on a full moon day. Goddess Durga is the central focus of worship. During this time, her ardent Nepalese devotees flood Her with abundant offerings.

The first nine days of Dashain is comprised of a secondary festival called Navaratri, which is also celebrated throughout India, where it usually consists of worship offered to forms of the Goddess: Saraswati (Goddess of learning and speech), Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth and prosperity) and Durga (Goddess of strength and courage). In Nepal, Durga, in her wrathful or terrifying aspect, takes center stage.

One popular story, accepted by many as suitable justification for Durga's wrath, tells of a battle, symbolizing the conflict of good and evil, waged between Goddess Durga and an asura named Mahisha. In this battle, Durga (good) defeats Mahisha (bad) after ten days of fighting. Today this conquest is celebrated in Nepal and throughout India as Vijaya Dasami, meaning "tenth day victory." Vijaya Dasami is concurrently celebrated as the victory of Lord Rama over the powerful demon Ravana. In Nepal, Dashain continues after Vijaya Dasami into another five days of celebration called Kojagrat Purnima. During this time, devotees visit relatives to share festival blessings.

**The conquest of evil:** Young male dancers perform the drama of Goddess Durga's battle with the buffalo demon, Mahisha, on the 9th day of Dashain at the Taleju Temple in Mul Chowk, Patan, Nepal. In Her ferocious aspect, Durga (right) displays Her considerable powers before slaying Mahisha. Such dance dramas have been performed in Nepal since the seventeenth century.

# Dashain





In preparation for Dashain, and in anticipation of Durga's visit, villagers throughout Nepal pray, chant mantras and ceremonially cleanse their houses, covering the floors with mud, cow dung and water. Dashain is a time for both celebration and austerity. Many devotees rise early in the morning to begin an intense regime of *sadhana* (personal devotional practices) that sometimes lasts all day. Some perform a special penance of spending an entire night lying or sitting perfectly still with burning oil lamps attached to their arms, legs and torso.

Dashain officially begins on a new moon day called Ghatasthapana, which means, "the establishment of the sacred vessel." (In 2005, this occurred on October 4, which happened to coincide with the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana, and the beginning of the Ramadan fast of the Muslims.) Early in the morning on this first day, devotees plant various grains in small vessels filled with riverbed sand. These pots, representing Goddess Durga, are watered and cared for daily in home shrines as the grains germinate and grow. When the sprouts fully emerge, after five or six days, they are used in ritual worship and worn in the hair or behind the ears as a blessing.

On the seventh day of Dashain, devotees carry their sacred vessels—now brimming with fresh greenery—from their home shrine rooms to the royal house of Gorkha, the residence of the ruling dynasty. This day is called Phulpati. It is a time of joy and splendid fanfare when most businesses

are closed so that everyone can completely enjoy the festivities.

In the evenings, thousands attend Devi temples, some carrying beautifully crafted lanterns made just for the occasion. At these temples, exotic music is performed as masked dancers enact myths associated with the Goddess.

From midnight of the eighth day, called Kalaratri (the Black Night), the sacrifices begin. Over the next three days, thousands of buffalos, goats, ducks and chickens are sacrificed to the Goddess. All the meat is distributed to devotees as *prasadam* (sacred offerings). It is generally believed that animals sacrificed during Dashain are reborn as humans. Many Hindus who consider this animal sacrifice to be cruel follow an alternative practice of breaking a coconut as a gesture of sacrifice.

On the ninth day, Durga is beseeched for the protection of all vehicles and their occupants. This pertains to every sort of conveyance, from luxury limos to humble bicycles. On this same day, God Vishvakarma, the heavenly architect and producer of all mechanical things, is also propitiated. All tools and implements of labor are worshiped with flowers, lights, incense and sacrifice. Students' books, desks and pens; carpenters' hammers and chisels; doctors' scalpels; plumbers' wrenches; computers—all receive sanctification. Marxists even have their hammer and sickle blessed.

On the tenth day, Vijaya Dasami, devotees receive the *tika* from elder relatives and

superiors. This *tika* is a red mark made of vermilion paste applied to the forehead as a benediction. From early in the morning, people line up in front of the Royal Palace to receive this sacred mark from the King and Queen of Nepal. First, the King receives *tika* in the early morning from his Royal guru. This is accompanied by a 31-gun salute. He then bestows the *tika* on his family, the Prime Minister and other high officials. Then the public is allowed to come forward into the palace grounds for their opportunity to receive the *tika* right from the hands of the monarch. This event continues throughout the day.

For the next five days, everybody visits relatives—receiving and giving *tika*, giving gifts, exchanging greetings and feasting. On the final full-moon day, Buddhists, who have been praying for the suffering of the world, participate in a day-long procession, during which they visit various shrines to scatter grains, coins and foodstuffs to bring peace to the souls of the dead.

This full moon day is known as Kojagrata, which means, "one who is awake." At this time, the worship of Durga, in Her wrathful aspect ends, and Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, is worshiped for prosperity, happiness and well-being. Life returns to normal, offices open, people go back to work, pilgrims return home. According to Nepalese tradition, those who observe the festival of Dashain acquire virtue, power, wealth and many offspring—even as they escape the miseries of evil and sin.



**A festival for everyone:** (Clockwise from upper left) This conventional icon of Durga depicts the Goddess holding, in Her eight arms, many weapons gifted to Her by the other Gods for the purpose of protecting the devas from the asuras. Devotees who do not believe in killing perform their sacrifice by cracking fresh coconuts instead of slaying animals. Tools of all sorts are blessed on the ninth day of Dashain. To gain merit for himself and the region in which he lives, a boy performs penance by spending one of the first nine nights of Dashain sitting so calmly he will not overturn the oil lamps attached to his body with cow dung. On the tenth day of Dashain, the King of Nepal blesses hundreds of Durga devotees in his Royal Palace.



**Jai Durga Ma:** (Above) On the seventh day of Dashain, a householder performs puja in his home shrine where six-day-old sprouts of corn and unhusked rice, called *Jamara*, have been placed to invoke auspiciousness. (Right) The Naxal Bhagwati Temple, one of Nepal's many Durga Temples.







**Standing strong for Hinduism:** (from left to right) Deepa Roy, Sudeep Roy (past president of Hindu Student Council, UC Berkeley), Shelvin Prasad (president Indian Students Association, UC Berkeley), Dr. Mihir Meghani (president, Hindu American Foundation), Dr. Chirag Patel and Janeshwari Devi (both of The Vedic Foundation) at the California Department of Education, Sacramento, California.

## EDUCATION

# Outcome Unknown on California Texts

Last minute siege led by Harvard academic holds up revisions to lessons on Hinduism and early India in ten proposed sixth grade social studies books

CALIFORNIA HINDUS WERE HOPEFUL following the December 2, 2005, meeting of the California State Board of Education Curriculum Commission. Their request to revise the Hinduism sections of several textbooks under consideration for adoption by the State was mostly approved. But a month later, the Board set that approval aside and went about revisiting the entire issue. As we go to press, there is no final resolution. The issue has generated national interest, with articles—both inaccurate and anti-Hindu—appearing in *Wall Street Journal* and *Christian Science Monitor*.

The Vedic Foundation ([www.thevedicfoundation.org/](http://www.thevedicfoundation.org/)) and Hindu Education Foundation ([www.hindueducation.org/](http://www.hindueducation.org/)) had worked for months through the California Department of Education (CDE) procedures

proposing improvements to those sections of California textbooks that deal with India and Hinduism. They requested 170 corrections (“edits,” as the CDE calls them). These were initially reviewed by a committee which included renowned Indologist, Dr. Shiva Bajpai, who had been hired by the Commission. Bajpai approved most of the edits.

Then, unexpectedly, Dr. Michael Witzel of Harvard University intervened, charging in a letter to the CDE that the changes were motivated by “Hindutva” forces and would “lead without fail to an international educational scandal if they are accepted by California’s State Board of Education.” The besieged Board set up a last-minute committee comprised of Dr. Witzel, Dr. Stanley Wolpert of UCLA and Dr. James Heitzman, of the University of California at Davis to

review the edits. These non-Hindu academics rejected 58 of the proposed Hindu edits approved by Bajpai, especially those dealing with caste and an Aryan invasion of India in ancient times.

Hindus despaired that the Curriculum Commission might accept the Witzel panel recommendations in their entirety on December 2. This is not, however, what happened. The Hindu view prevailed at this meeting in large part, and Hindus were momentarily relieved.

Then in late December the Board of Education chose to ignore the Commission recommendations entirely. Instead, they called a closed-door meeting on January 6 involving members of the Board of Education, staff, Witzel and Bajpai, to reconsider all the disputed edits. The meeting structure



ANUPAM SHEKHAWAT



EASAN KATIR

**In the trenches:** (top) Hindu Education Foundation volunteers pose with preliminary editions of eight of the proposed texts. They include, third from left, Anjali Patel; eighth from left, Madhulika Singh; centered under Gandhi portrait, Dr. Vijay Ashar; and (next to Dr. Ashar) HEF president Khanderao Kand. (below) Concerned Hindu Sanjay Tripathi of Cupertino addresses the California Curriculum Commission meeting of December 1, 2005.



EASAN KATIR



EASAN KATIR

was such that Witzel and Bajpai were asked to agree or come to a compromise on each edit in question. If they failed to agree or compromise, then the original wording of the text would stand. As Witzel agreed with most of the original wordings, he needed only to reject any compromise with Bajpai to have his own opinion prevail. There was a certain amount of agreement or compromise, Bajpai said about 85 percent of the edits were decided in a manner acceptable to Hindus. But the remaining 15 percent, involving critical issues of Aryan influence in India, caste and rights of women were not.

As of late January, no official report has been made on this meeting. A subcommittee has been formed by the Board of Education to review the meeting’s results. Under California state law, any meeting which results in “decisions” has to be open to the public, and the January 6 session was not. Bajpai was the only Hindu present at the day-long meeting, while others waited in the hall outside. The subcommittee may report in time for the Board’s February meeting. They face pressure from the book publishers, who must make all the requested corrections and get the books printed for the coming school year, which begins in the fall. For the latest update, visit our Hindu Press International website at [www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/).

## The Curriculum Commission Meeting

Though the results are now moot, the Curriculum Commission meeting was encouraging to Hindus, as they found a sympathetic ally in Commissioner Dr. Stan Metzenberg, a biologist at California State University Northridge. At the beginning of the meeting, he made a motion to accept all of the original recommendations of the Hindu groups as approved by Dr. Bajpai’s committee, with the provision to go through the Witzel panel rejections of 58 one by one. This motion passed. By the time the hearing was over, only 16 of the Witzel committee edits were accepted.

Dr. Metzenberg is no stranger to teaching controversies. According to *Forbes* magazine, he has been “a leader, along with Nobel laureate Glenn Seaborg, in the effort to make the standards for California science teaching as rigorous as possible.” He has testified before the US Congress at hearings on the national standards for teaching science at the middle and high school level. Ten textbooks were under consideration for



EASAN KATIR

**The Curriculum Commission Meeting:** Closed circuit TV of the proceedings on December 2. From top to bottom are Prof. James Heitzman of the University of California at Davis, Commissioner Metzenberg (who sided with the Hindus) and Commissioner Munger. Nearly all discussion during several hours of hearings on the Hindu edits took place between these three, with only one Hindu allowed to speak briefly.

adoption for 6th grade social studies classes in the California schools. The textbook manufacturers produced preliminary editions of their books, which were then distributed throughout school districts in California requesting comments and corrections. The Curriculum Commission considered chang-





**Hinduism in the texts:** Above are two of only six photos in the entire Hinduism section of the McGraw-Hill Glencoe book, World History, Journey Across Time, The Early Ages. The man identified as a "Brahman" is obviously a Muslim, holding his hands in the distinctive fashion of Muslim prayer. To the Hindu complaint about this, the Witzel/Wolpert/Heitzman committee responded, "Delete the inserted circular image entirely, leaving us with a powerful picture of the scavenging lifestyle associated with untouchability." There are no comparable negative pictures associated with the presentation of any other faith.

es from certain groups. These edits had to be relatively minor, and not represent major additions or deletions to the texts. Each group was allowed to submit from dozens to hundreds of edits. Everything had to be in keeping with the California "Standards," which set overall teaching concepts and the "Framework" or specific outline of the subject.

### Debating the Edits

Much of the discussion during the four-hour meeting was between Commissioner Dr. Charles Munger, Jr., physicist, Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, and Commissioner Metzenberg. Consultant Heitzman was the only one allowed to address the Commission on any questions until Janeshwari Devi, Director of Programs for the Vedic Foundation, complained to Commission members that no Hindus were being consulted. She was allowed to make a few comments, and then no further questions were addressed either to her or Dr. Heitzman.

Commissioner Munger, who identified himself as an Episcopalian, was the only Board member who advocated accepting the edits of the Witzel panel. Commissioner Metzenberg, on the other hand, took the view that Hindus should at least be able to "recognize their own religion when they read these textbooks." Several Commissioners abstained from voting, citing lack of expertise on the subject. Commissioners Man and Levine actively made and seconded motions to get the Commission through the long list of edits in a timely way. Commissioner Munger's attempts to get Witzel's version of Hindu religion into the texts were voted down time and again.

On the contentious point of an Aryan invasion of India around 1500 bce, Heitzman

agreed to soften this to Aryan migration, as there is no evidence found of a violent invasion. But Commissioner Metzenberg, a biologist, objected on scientific grounds. He said, "I've read the DNA research, and there was no Aryan migration. I believe the hard evidence of DNA more than I believe historians." It was finally agreed to say, "Some historians believe in the theory of an Aryan migration." This is not as much change as Hindus requested, but it was a major advancement.

One change recommended by the Vedic Foundation was the use of "deity" for "statue" in referring to the sculpted image of a God or Goddess, called *murti* in Sanskrit. This change was recommended by Bajpai and rejected by Witzel's group. The Commission agreed to the Hindu request to change "statue" to "deity." At this point, Commissioner Munger said in an exasperated manner, "It's just too extreme to call a statue a deity. It's just too extreme." One meaning of deity, according to Webster's dictionary, is "a representation of a god or goddess, such as a statue or carving."

Another issue the Witzel panel disapproved was using upper-case "G" for God when referring to Hindu worship of God. Commissioner Levine noted that for Hindus there are many forms of the one God. Hindus requested one sentence in one book be changed from saying, "Modern Hindus continue to visit temples to express their love of the gods," to "...visit temples to worship and express their love for God." This was rejected by Witzel's group, but accepted by the Commission. Similar changes on "God" were accepted throughout the books, thus bringing the Hindu view of the Supreme Being on par with the other religions taught to children.

At one point, Dr. Heitzman warned the

Commission, "I advise you to err on the side of conservatism and be very careful about adopting any of these changes." Commissioner Metzenberg replied pointedly, "On the contrary, to err on the side of conservatism, we should err on the side of Hindus. After all, it's their religion." Metzenberg also felt a comment by Witzel's panel on one edit was "insensitive." That edit was to fix the incorrect statement that the *Ramayana* was written later than the *Mahabharata*. Witzel's group wrote, "Who in sixth grade cares which epic was 'written' first?" Metzenberg observed, "It obviously matters to Hindus."

Janeshwari Devi, Vedic Foundation, Director of Programs, considers the proceedings a partial victory. Her main concern was that 355 edits submitted by the Vedic Foundation dealing with eight of the ten books were shelved during earlier proceedings and not even considered at this meeting. She felt this was a breach of CDE procedure and plans to appeal. She said, "The most significant event of yesterday was that scholarship prevailed instead of scholars who hold anti-Hindu views and have an agenda to keep the Aryan Invasion in the books."

### How the Jewish Faith Fared

Immediately following the Hindu edits, more than 600 edits from the Jewish community were accepted in their entirety without a single challenge. This recommendation of the Commission has not been subject to any further challenge, while their recommendation on the Hindus edits was rejected in entirety.

The list of Jewish edits shows the possibilities for adjustment to the texts. The entire list of edits is available [www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yro5/documents/bluenovo5item05.doc](http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yro5/documents/bluenovo5item05.doc). This is a 117-page document, beginning with the Jewish and Muslim issues and ending with the Hindu (from pages 77 to 105). This document also contains the Hindu corrections as reviewed and recommended by Dr. Bajpai.

Many of the complaints from the Jewish groups were on the subject of Jesus. One, for example, said, "The text often implicated Jews in the death of Jesus, and suggests conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. This is in violation of the California Standards." On page 27 of the edit document is a list of general complaints by Jews. "The Institute for Curriculum Services (who reviewed the texts) reviewers object to the use of the word 'story' in reference to the Hebrew Bible, as they allege it conveys the idea that the events described are fictitious." Hindus made a similar complaint about their scriptures being referred to as "stories."

The Jews objected to this sentence, "King Herod was known for his cruelty and the additions he made to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem." They said, "The statement of

**LINKING TO TODAY**

### Nonviolence

In modern times, nonviolence has been a powerful tool for social protest. Mohandas Gandhi led a long nonviolent struggle against British rule in India. This movement helped India win its independence in 1947. About 10 years later, Martin Luther King Jr. adopted Gandhi's nonviolent methods in his struggle to win civil rights for African Americans. Then, in the 1960s, Cesar Chavez organized a campaign of nonviolence to protest the treatment of farm workers in California. These three leaders proved that people can bring about social change without using violence. As Chavez once explained, "Nonviolence is not inaction. It is not for the timid or the weak. It is hard work. It is the patience to win."

Mohandas Gandhi (top), Martin Luther King Jr. (above), and Cesar Chavez (right)

**SKILL** ANALYZING INFORMATION

How did these three leaders prove that nonviolence is a powerful tool for social change?

Herod's cruelty is another instance of unnecessary negative information about Jewish kings." Their objection was accepted, and the statement rewritten.

A common theme in the Jewish edits was taking out references to Christianity as somehow an "improvement" upon Judaism, or a "replacement" for Judaism. This same kind of thinking comes in the text descriptions of both Buddhism and Jainism, which are presented as "improvements" over Hinduism. For example, a textbook by publisher McGraw Hill/Glencoe, reads, "By 600 BC, many Indians began to question Hindu ideas. The Brahman priests seemed to care only about their temple ceremonies and not about the needs of the people." Khandarao of the Hindu Education Foundation, argued, "Just as the books can't criticize Judaism in explaining Christianity, they shouldn't be able to criticize Hinduism in presenting Buddhism."

### California's Teaching System

It is important to understand these issues in the light of the California laws governing school textbooks. There are two documents which contain these laws. One is the "Standards for Evaluating Instruction Materials for Social Content," ([www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/socialcontent.pdf](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/socialcontent.pdf)), and the other is the "History-Social Science Framework," ([www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fd/documents/history-social-sci-frame.pdf](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fd/documents/history-social-sci-frame.pdf)). They are manifestly an attempt at social engineering through the school system. The idea is to educate children into a harmonious view of California's pluralistic society while not perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices of the past.

The first document defines the guiding principles. With regard to religion, it reads in full: "Purpose. The standards enable all

students to become aware and accepting of religious diversity while being allowed to remain secure in any religious beliefs they may already have. *Method.* The standards will be achieved by depicting, when appropriate, the diversity of religious beliefs held in the United States and California, as well as in other societies, without displaying bias toward or prejudice against any of those beliefs or religious beliefs in general.

"*Applicability of Standards.* The standards are derived to a degree from the United States and the California constitutions and relate closely to the requirements concerning the portrayal of cultural diversity. Compliance is required. .... 1. *Adverse reflection.* No religious belief or practice may be held up to ridicule and no religious group may be portrayed as inferior. 2. *Indoctrination.* Any explanation or description of a religious belief or practice should be presented in a manner that does not encourage or discourage belief or indoctrinate the student in any particular religious belief. 3. *Diversity.* When religion is discussed or depicted, portrayals of contemporary American society should reflect religious diversity." The Jewish groups often cited these principles in making edits, especially "adverse reflection."

The second document, the "Framework," lists in detail what is to be taught. Hinduism appears in section 6.5 on ancient history. It reads: "Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of India. 1. Locate and describe the major river system and discuss the physical setting that supported the rise of this civilization. 2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions. 3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved

**Getting it right:** Publisher Holt's book, World History, Ancient Civilizations, credits nonviolence to Indian thought and shows its relevance today. As with most books, though, it gives more credit to Jainism for promoting ahimsa or nonviolence than to Hinduism in which it originated.

into early Hinduism. 4. Outline the social structure of the caste system. 5. Know the life and moral teachings of the Buddha and how Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon, and Central Asia. 6. Describe the growth of the Maurya empire and the political and moral achievements of the emperor Asoka. 7. Discuss important aesthetic and intellectual traditions (e.g., Sanskrit literature, including the Bhagavad Gita; medicine; metallurgy; and mathematics, including Hindu-Arabic numerals and the zero)."

The Framework requirements governing other religions are far more philosophically and spiritually rich. For comparison, here is part of Framework section 6.3 on Judaism: "Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Ancient Hebrews. 1. Describe the origins and significance of Judaism as the first monotheistic religion based on the concept of one God who sets down moral laws for humanity. 2. Identify the sources of the ethical teachings and central beliefs of Judaism (the Hebrew Bible, the Commentaries): belief in God, observance of law, practice of the concepts of righteousness and justice, and importance of study; and describe how the ideas of the Hebrew traditions are reflected in the moral and ethical traditions of Western civilization. 3. Explain the significance of Abraham, Moses, Naomi, Ruth, David, and Yohanan ben Zaccai in the development of the Jewish religion. 4. Discuss the locations of the settlements and movements of Hebrew peoples, including the Exodus...."

The Judaism Framework section is far more comprehensive in terms of theology than the Hindu section is. Under Hinduism, students learn Aryan Invasion and caste more than theology, and the *Bhagavad Gita* is listed under "aesthetic and intellectual traditions," rather than religion. Neither God nor religion is mentioned under Hinduism, while both appear twice under Judaism. The Framework comes up for review in 2008, at which times Hindus are planning to request changes to bring the teaching of Hinduism in line with the other religions.

California Hindus have achieved at least a modest victory on the textbook issue. Their successes, failures and lessons learned will be of strategic help in dealing with the same issues in other states, and even internationally. The Vedic Foundation and Hindu Education Foundation through months of diligent work have begun to change the depiction of Hinduism in US classrooms.



**Lesson 2**

**MAIN IDEAS**

- Culture** A group of nomadic people moved into India and took over what was left of Harappan civilization.
- Government** Under Aryan rule, Indian society developed a distinct system of social classes that still affects India today.
- Belief Systems** Over time, the belief of the Aryans developed into the religion of Hinduism.

**TAKING NOTES**

**Reading Skill: Summarizing**  
To summarize is to restate a passage in fewer words. After you read Lesson 2, write a paragraph summarizing each of the three main sections. Use a chart like the one below to record your summaries.

The Origins of Hinduism
The Aryans migrated
Aryan culture changed India by
The main characteristics of Hinduism are

© Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, page 81


**USE YOUR SKILLS**

**6.5.2** Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.

**6.5.3** Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.

**6.5.4** Outline the social structure of the caste system.

**6.5.7** Discuss important aesthetic and intellectual traditions (e.g., Sanskrit literature, including the *Bhagavad Gita*, medicine, metallurgy, and mathematics, including Hindu-Arabic numerals and the zero).



**A Shiva** One of the most important gods of Hinduism is Shiva, the destroyer. This statue shows him dancing on the lotus of ignorance.

## What's in Those Vexed Texts?

**N**EITHER THE WORST NOR the best, but typical for California's sixth-grade social studies textbooks, this lesson from *World History, Ancient Civilizations*, published by McDougal Littell, tells a tale. Save a few topics covered briefly elsewhere in the book, it constitutes the book's entire information on Hinduism. Put on your reading glasses and read it for yourself, beginning at the upper left and continuing around counter-clockwise.

The word *Aryan* appears 36 times on these six pages. Hindu worship, Sanskrit language and the *Vedas* are said to have been brought to India by the Aryans—conclusions based on linguistics but unsupported by either archeology or recent DNA research. Dravidians are

said to have lived in North India, a conjecture with no supporting evidence. The words *caste* and *class* appear collectively 19 times throughout the lesson, as if this was the central feature of Hinduism.

Topics such as the many saints, scriptures and subjects of the scriptures, which are covered at great length in the same book's lessons on Judaism and Christianity, are absent from this lesson on Hinduism. For example, this book's chapter, "The Hebrew Kingdoms," opens with a poignant, illustrated two-page story about Ruth and Naomi, two key figures in Judaism's early history. Lesson One devotes the first two of its six pages to the most important precepts of Jewish theology, continues with four pages on

the religion's history that any Jew today would recognize and be pleased with, then adds an illustrated four-page special feature on The Exodus from the *Bible* at the end.

The Hindu religion's respectful tolerance, which allowed followers of other religions to migrate to India and live free from persecution and proselytization for the last two thousand years is overlooked. Countless other facets of Hinduism, such as its lofty, sensible theology, philosophy, temple worship, home culture, music and dance, the South Indian tradition and Hinduism's spread into other parts of Asia, are flagrantly ignored. The *Bhagavad Gita* is declared to be Hinduism's most important text instead of the *Vedas* and *Agamas*.

A short, middle-school social studies lesson on Hinduism is not the place for scholars to ex-

plore every perceived injustice of ancient Indian history. This isn't the mode by which other religions' histories are taught. In one book, a reference to slavery in ancient Israel, for example, was objected to and consequently deleted from the lessons on Judaism. The Hindu lesson should present children with a well-rounded and respectful summary of a religion and its historical context in the same way the lessons on Judaism and Christianity do. But Hinduism is clearly presented in the worst possible light as a bizarre, antiquated, inferior religion, leaving both Hindu and non-Hindu children with an aversion to this oldest and most philosophically sophisticated of world faiths. Little wonder one boy, after studying Hinduism at school, announced to his mother, "I don't want to be Hindu anymore."

**Many Paths to God** Hindus believe they connect with God by following their own individual path. Part of that path concerns one's job, which is linked to the caste system. Devout Hindus must faithfully carry out their assigned duties in life.

Hindus have a choice of spiritual practices to grow closer to God. Two of these are also popular in Western countries. Meditation is the practice of making the mind calm. Yoga is a complex practice that includes exercise, breathing techniques, and diet.

**REVIEW** How can Hindus believe in one God and many different gods at the same time?

### Lesson Summary

- After Harappan civilization declined, Aryan people brought their culture to India.
- Aryan society developed a class structure that was based on jobs and is called the caste system.
- Hindus worship many gods. They believe in reincarnation and karma.

### Why It Matters Now . . .

Hinduism ranks third among world religions in the number of followers (after Christianity and Islam).

**2 Lesson Review**

**Terms & Names**

- Explain the importance of Aryan, caste, Brahmanism, Hinduism, reincarnation, karma.

**Using Your Notes**

**Summarizing** Use your completed chart to answer the following question:

- How did Hinduism grow out of the beliefs of Brahmanism? (6.5.3)

**Main Ideas**

- How did the Aryan culture differ from Harappan culture? (6.5.2)
- What was the social structure of the Aryan caste system? (6.5.4)
- How does karma relate to reincarnation? (6.5.3)

**Critical Thinking**

- Recognizing Changing Interpretations** What changed the long-held theory that Aryan invaders drove out the Harappan people? (6.5.2)
- Drawing Conclusions from Sources** What values of a warrior culture does the passage from the *Bhagavad Gita* express? (6.5.7)

**Activity**

**Internet Activity** Use the Internet to learn about Hindu customs concerning one of these topics: the Ganges River, cows, festivals, diet. Present your findings to the class in an oral presentation. (6.5.3)

**INTERNET KEYWORDS:** Hinduism, Ganges

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**The Origins of Hinduism**

**Build on What You Know** In Chapter 5, you learned how Egypt battled the Hittites. The Hittites belonged to a group of peoples who all spoke dialects of a language called Indo-European. Scholars believe that the Indo-Europeans may have originally come from Central Asia.


**Aryans Move into India**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Who were the Aryans?

Most Indo-Europeans were nomads. They lived in family groups or clans and herded cattle, sheep, and goats. They also were warriors who rode horse-driven chariots. They fought with long bows and arrows and with bronze axes.

**The Indo-European Migrations** Around 2000 B.C., something drove the Indo-Europeans from their homeland. Historians do not know if a drought, a plague, or an invasion made them leave. Different groups moved to different regions. The Hittites went to Southwest Asia. Many other Indo-Europeans settled in parts of Europe.

**Hindu Myth** This mountain range runs along the northwest border of the Indian subcontinent. The Aryan people crossed these mountains to enter India.



**The Aryan Invasions** In about 1500 B.C., a group of Indo-Europeans called the **Aryans** (AIR-ee-uh-ee) traveled east into India. In contrast to the city-dwelling Harappans, the Aryans were herders. They lived in simple houses. They spoke an Indo-European language called Sanskrit.

Did Aryan warriors in chariots conquer the walled cities and force the Harappans to flee south? For years, history books told that story. But new research suggests a different tale. Two hundred years before the Aryans arrived, the largest Harappan cities lay in ruins. As Lesson 1 explained, this destruction may have been the result of earthquakes and floods.

**REVIEW** Who were the Aryans, and where did they come from?

**Changes to Indian Life**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How was Aryan society organized?

The Aryans entered India gradually. They practiced a mysterious religion that appealed to many Dravidians—the people living in India when they arrived. As a result, Aryan religion and language spread. In turn, the Dravidians taught the Aryans about city life. Because of these interactions, India developed a complex, blended culture.

**The Caste System** Aryan society was organized into classes: warriors, priests, and commoners. As Indian society grew more complex, these classes developed into what was later called the caste system. A **caste** is a social class whose members are identified by their job. Because there are thousands of different jobs, thousands of groups exist. Broadly, these groups are organized into four categories. (See the chart on the next page.)


After many centuries, a fifth group came into being that was considered below all other groups. This fifth group is called the untouchables. They had to do the jobs no one else wanted.

**Geography Skillbuilder: Interpreting Maps** Movement What geographic feature stopped the Aryans from moving into China?



**The Caste System**

Indian society divides itself into a complex structure of social classes based partially on jobs. This class structure is called the caste system.



**Aryans Beliefs and Brahmanism** The early religion of the Aryans is now called **Brahmanism**, after the name of the Aryan priests, or Brahmins. The Aryans worshiped many nature gods. The Brahmins made sacrifices to those gods by offering animals to a sacred fire. Over time, the ceremonies became more and more complex. Some lasted for days—or even months. The rituals of the Aryan religion and many hymns to their gods are found in ancient Sanskrit texts called the Vedas.

As time passed, Indians began to question how the world came into being. These questions led to changes in Brahmanism. One change was a belief that one spirit governed the universe.

Later, Indians wrote about their ancient history in such works as the *Mahabharata* (MAH-buh-BAH-yuh-mah)—an epic poem that retells many legends. The *Bhagavad Gita* (BAH-guh-vahd GEE-tah) is part of the *Mahabharata*. (See the Primary Source on page 230.)

**REVIEW** What is the caste system?

**Hinduism: The Religion of India**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did the religion of Hinduism develop?

The *Bhagavad Gita* is the most important text of Hinduism. **Hinduism** is the modern name for the major religion of India, which grew out of early Brahmanism.

**Primary Source**

**Background:** The *Bhagavad Gita* tells the story of a warrior, Prince Arjuna. A great war is about to begin. When he looks at the enemy army, Arjuna sees many friends and relatives. He does not want to fight. With Arjuna is his chariot driver, Krishna. In reality, Krishna (shown at right) is the god Vishnu in human form. In this excerpt, Krishna tells Arjuna that he must do his duty.

**Document-Based Question** What arguments does Krishna use to convince Arjuna that the outcome of the battle is not important?

**from the Bhagavad Gita**  
Translated by Ramchar Prasad

Do not hesitate in your sacred duty as a warrior. For a soldier nothing is more sacred than the fight for a just cause. . . .

If you do not take up this just fight, you will fail in your duty and your honor will be lost. . . .

If you die in battle you will enter heaven. If you win, you will enjoy the earth. Therefore rise and fight with determination. Fight for the sake of fighting. Look equally on happiness and distress, gain and loss, victory and defeat. In this way you will not incur sin.

**Many Gods** Hindus worship many gods. Although they believe in many gods, Hindus also recognize one supreme God or life force. Hindus consider the other gods to be parts of the one universal God. The three most important of the other gods are Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the protector; and Shiva, the destroyer. (Shiva destroys the world so that it can be created anew.) Shiva's wife, Kali, also has many worshippers.

**Many Lives** Hindus believe in **reincarnation**, which means that each person has many lives. What a person does in each life determines what he or she will be in the next life, according to a doctrine called **karma**. Good deeds allow a person to be reborn as a higher being. Evil deeds cause a person to be reborn as a lower being, such as an insect. (Hindus believe that animals, like humans, have the supreme life force in them. For that reason, many Hindus are vegetarians. They will not eat animals.)

Reincarnation creates a repeating cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The cycle ends only when a person achieves a mystical union with God. To achieve that, a person must come to realize that his or her soul and God's soul are one.

**Vocabulary Strategy**  
The word **reincarnation** uses the prefix *re-*, which means "again," and the root *car-*, which means "to go." Therefore, reincarnation means that the soul takes on another body.







INTERVIEW

# BORN FOR BALAJI

Tirupati's first servant: A.V. Ramana Dikshitulu, PhD, chose to honor his heritage

A priest talks about the *Agamas*, the heritage of his forefathers and why he and his sons chose to honor their family tradition

**D**R. A.V. RAMANA DIKSHITULU is the head priest at the Balaji temple in Tirumala, one of India's most respected pilgrimage destinations (see HINDUISM TODAY, January/February/March 2006). He is deeply respected by his peers for honoring his family tradition. Ramana holds a doctorate in molecular biology and is an inimitable authority on the *Agamas*, abstruse but crucially important Hindu scriptures. HINDUISM TODAY'S Rajiv Malik had the rare opportunity to interview this distinguished Hindu cleric.

**Can you please describe the *Vaikhanasa Agama* and explain why it is important?** The *Agamas* in general are revered along with the *Vedas* as primary Hindu scripture. All of the *Agamas* elucidate the science of ritual, but the *Vaikhanasa Agama* is unique in that it gives more detail concerning the performance of ritual, both in the temple and in the home. The *Vaikhanasa Agama*, written by Sage Vikhanasa, is one of four main Vaishnava *Agamas*. It was spread around the world by his four famous disciples: Marichi, Bhrigu, Kashyapa and Atri. It includes procedures for the consecration of a temple and its Deity of worship, as well as explanations for how this consecration absorbs the primal power from the universe to bring it into the main sanctum of the temple.

The message of the *Agamas* is that the essence of ritual is power—spiritual power. Through ritual, the great, universal essence of life itself is brought into a temple Deity, where it then must be maintained without dilution or pollution.

**Can you give us more detail on the contents of the *Vaikhanasa Agama*?** The *Vaikhanasa Agama* exists in two parts. The first part deals with rituals that are done in the temple and to the Deity. The second part deals with purification ceremonies that a priest must undergo in order to qualify to serve in the temple.

The temple rituals are designed to keep the laymen's physical senses satisfied. This is done by making the process personal. All of this is laid out in the *Vaikhanasa Agama*. It describes how the Deity is treated as we would like to be treated ourselves. He is put to sleep at night and awakened in the morning. He is given a bath and dressed in fine silks, jewelled ornaments and fragrant flowers. He is fed a variety of fine foods. Finally, he is carried in grand procession around the temple. As we all know, the dearest thing to man is man. We know God will be happy if we do for Him what we would do for ourselves.

**Can anyone study the *Vaikhanasa Agama*?** Although the *Vaikhanasa Agama* is available to be read by anyone who knows Sanskrit, it is not easily understood, even by Sanskrit scholars, because of its coded language. The verses have double meanings. The valuable inner meanings can only be perceived by those who meditate deeply upon the verses. Even then, only those at a certain level of spiritual evolution can grasp the deepest meaning. We conduct workshops to stimulate this understanding in our priests.

**Does the *Vaikhanasa Agama* delineate the training of priests?** Yes, it does. It deals with how a priest should be brought up and how a priest should be purified by rituals

even while he is in the womb of his mother. For the unborn priest, the training and purification process begins from the mother's eighth month of pregnancy. At this time, a ceremony called the *shanka chakra ankita* is performed. The purpose of this ceremony is to sanctify the unborn child to become a priest after birth. We do this ritual in the home of the mother. It is not a public event.

**Are the principles of the *Vaikhanasa Agama* to be implemented only by priests?** This *Agama* is for people who have no other purpose on Earth but to worship Lord Vishnu. Yes, it is for priests—priests who will take up no other vocation. Take me, for example. I am a doctor in molecular biology. Yet, I am a priest. My elder son is an expert in computers and has a college degree in finance and marketing. My second son is an electrical engineer, and my third son is a bio-chemist. Yet they are also priests. Like me, they serve here in the Balaji temple in Tirumala. Our education is simply a matter of interest—like a hobby. We are priests by profession, and will be so until we die.

**Is this priesthood in Tirumala hereditary only?** Yes, our tradition must be maintained hereditarily. Conversions are not allowed. *Vaikhanasas* are from South India, but they can migrate to other places. In Rishikesh we have our own TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) temple. There are nearly 2,000 temples around the world where our priests can and do work. All of these temples were set up later than this temple here in Tirumala.

**Can you please tell us more about the training of your priests?** In our families, the priests get training from their parents, who are also priests. From their earliest childhood they are going to the temple. According to the *Vaikhanasa Agama*, all of the rituals conducted in the temples are also performed in the home. Every priest's home has a shrine room of its own, with sacred *murtis* (Deities) inherited from ancestors. The father gives both the theoretical and the practical training to the children.

I insist to our younger generation of priests that they have their full *Agama* training in addition to whatever other education they choose to receive in college. With this preparation, they are qualified to become full-fledged priests. I also insist that they honor their commitment to their priesthood so that they can pass that heritage on to their children. This includes leading a pure life and following the dress code and food restrictions set down in the *Agamas*.

**Is the younger generation willingly following your lead in maintaining this time-honored tradition?** There are some problems,

but not because of a lack of sincerity. If our smart, young, qualified priests are not receiving payment and respect matching that which they might find in other professions for which they could qualify due to extensive college education, we can expect them to be tempted to forego their heritage. All of the senior priests of Tirumala recently sat together to discuss this very matter, and we came to the conclusion that we must insist to all of our young people that they work in our temple as priests, regardless of what they are paid. Money must be secondary. We have already told them this. We now have around sixty priests working in the temple, and every one is happy.

**From your perspective as a priest, how may devotees receive their greatest benefit from a pilgrimage to Tirumala?** If we pray to such a powerful Lord as Balaji for minor things like a promotion, a transfer, a seat in medical college or a marriage proposal, it is possible that these wishes will be granted. But making such requests is like asking for a spoonful of water from an ocean. There is something so much greater to be had here: spiritual evolution. Through the ages, man has evolved both technically and spiritually. However, further spiritual evolution must now take place, for man is still spiritually primitive. It is natural during this Kali Yuga (age of darkness) that we be more attracted to worldly pleasures and ignore spiritual pursuits. To have even a preliminary understanding of the spiritual path during these difficult times depends largely upon one's personal karmas. These are karmas brought over from previous births.

**Should everyone hear about the spiritual path, even if some are not yet ready to follow it?** Yes, and we can do more to spread this message here at Tirupati. We can and we should do more. Many believe that just coming to the temple, receiving the Lord's *darshan* (sight) and getting a few pieces of the *prasadam* (food sacraments) is the main target of a pilgrimage. Of course, they take this approach because they have not been taught anything else. We have to convey the proper attitudes of worship here at the TTD. First we must teach the spiritual importance of this sacred place.

**Can you give an example that illustrates the power of Tirumala?** A woman from Bangalore came to this temple and asked me to bless her sister in London who was very ill with what had been described by doctors as the final stages of cancer. She said that the doctors had given her only 90 days to live. This woman was crying as she told me all this. She pleaded with me to do something. I told her that I couldn't do anything myself, but perhaps Lord Balaji

might be able to. I gave a little *prasadam* from the temple, along with some holy water and a small picture of Balaji. I told her to send that picture to London immediately. Today that girl in London, who was given only ninety days to live, has been alive and well for more than two years, and her condition is steadily improving.

**Can you tell us a little about your own experience here at the temple?** Every instant is precious to me. For every moment that I have spent here, I thank the Lord and pray that He keeps me in this place until my dying breath. To touch the Deity and to worship Him, to give Him His sacred bath, to feed Him, to dress Him and to decorate Him—for all of this, I am so very grateful. I am grateful to my ancestors who prayed that their progeny should live in the service of the Lord, and I am grateful to God.

For me, religion is also a science of a higher order. Unfortunately, there are no scientific instruments yet created that can measure the power of religion. However, in the *Agamas*—particularly in the *Vaikhanasa Agama*—there are ways to measure spiritual energy. Everything that happens in the temple can be explained Agamically. The study of the *Agamas* also comprises a great part of my personal experience in this temple. For the *Agamas*, I am also grateful.

**What is your message to the Hindu Community around the world?** The *Vedas* say, "Let us live together, let us eat together and let us seek the truth together." This ancient scripture invites all human beings—regardless of creed, caste, age or sex—to live harmoniously and seek the truth. It is the duty of every human being, at least every Hindu, to obey this message, to try and live in peace with one another.

Lord Balaji, with His left hand folded over the left knee and His right hand pointing down, conveys the unspoken message that if you come and surrender at His feet and leave everything to Him, He will make the ocean of life only knee deep for you so that you can easily walk through it to the bank of salvation on the other side. That is the message of Lord Balaji. Let us surrender at His holy feet for the sake of salvation.

Balaji tells us that there is a power greater than human power. When a devotee steps into the temple, he can feel this power emanating from Balaji's own self-manifested image. Through time, so many sages and seers have come here to worship this God. The spiritual vibrations of these great souls remain here. They are so strong that anyone can feel them. When we personally feel this permanent spiritual bliss of Balaji, we do not need to be told that the physical plane is not permanent. We know this truth as a fact that requires no proof.





FINANCE

# Of Bulls, Bears and The Stars Above

A Vedic astrologer brings the stars down to Earth to tell fortunes on Wall Street



R. G. Krishnan

**J**yotish Vachaspati R.G. Krishnan has been practicing Vedic Astrology for more than 50 years. His articles on this subject have appeared in India in Astrological Magazine, Times of India and Times of Astrology. In the USA, he has written for the Palani Panchang, a yearly almanac published in San Francisco since 1986, and for India Herald, a newspaper printed in Houston, Texas, where he currently lives. He is the author of two books—Vedic Astrology-Ashtaka Varga and Vedic Astrology-Stock Market Analysis—and produces e-books on his website ([www.anubazaar.com/rgkrishnan/](http://www.anubazaar.com/rgkrishnan/)) which target monthly stock market trends. While in Hawaii giving seminars at an Astrology convention in September of 2005, he spoke with the editors of HINDUISM TODAY. To more fully understand his thoughts, readers who are unacquainted with the basics of Vedic Astrology might enjoy a fundamental presentation of the subject at [www.vedicastrology.com/vedicvswestern.htm](http://www.vedicastrology.com/vedicvswestern.htm) or [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic\\_astrology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_astrology).

**What inspired you to use Vedic astrology in stock market analysis?** Even before I moved to this country in 1989, I was asked by Mr. Devendra Trivedi, a distinguished astrologer living in Fremont, California, to write articles for his publication entitled *Palani Panchang*. He asked me if I had any ideas on interesting topics relevant to astrology but not generally published. I suggested the general concept of relating Vedic astrology to the economy in some practical way. He said that would be nice. So I gave it some thought and began doing what I am doing now: forecasting economic trends from the perspective of Vedic Astrology.

**Can you explain how astrology can be used in understanding the bulls and the bears of Wall Street?** The bullish signs are Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius and Pisces. When planets transit these signs, bullish trends are likely in the market. The bearish signs are Gemini, Virgo, Capricorn and Aquarius. When planets transit these signs, bearish trends can be expected.

**Is your method of stock market analysis derived from an ancient system?** Yes, the stock market is nothing but a group of people trading goods. Our classics on astrology, like the *Brihad Samhita*, talk about the direct influence of the planets on the trading of commodities, even 5,000 years ago. Back then, people were very serious about consulting astrology in basically what was then the stock market. There has always been this buying and selling of goods in the marketplace, and recorded history shows that Vedic astrology was always being utilized. So that makes it a time-tested system.

**Were the Vedic texts referring to astrology ever available in some way to the public for everyday use in the market place?** Actually, this ancient knowledge is embedded in Vedic verses in a cryptic way. For instance, one verse might state that when Saturn is conjunct Venus, married life is negatively affected. The principle behind this—that any malefic planet placed with a benefic will disrupt peace—is not spelled out or fully explained. This purposeful lack of technical detail protected the knowledge from those who lacked the intuition to sort out the deeper wisdom behind the words.

**Can you talk about stock market trading using Vedic astrology as a practice of dharma?** Yes, of course. A human being has to survive. Even if I perform charity, I must have money to give. I cannot give away money that I do not have. Many charitable organizations invest wisely in the stock market. Certainly, to make money righteously is not wrong, especially if a portion of it is used to help others. Using the principles of

Vedic astrology can be of great benefit to people who want to make money for a good purpose. Of course, we should not be overly greedy and we should not break the law.

**How would you draw up a chart for stock analysis?** Country charts are to be made for the capital of the country. For India, we make it for New Delhi, and for USA, we make it for Washington, DC. The planetary locations will be the same in both the charts, but the ascendant will be different. On a new moon day, both Sun and Moon are in the same degree. For the USA, we make a chart for the date when the New Moon occurs in Washington, DC.

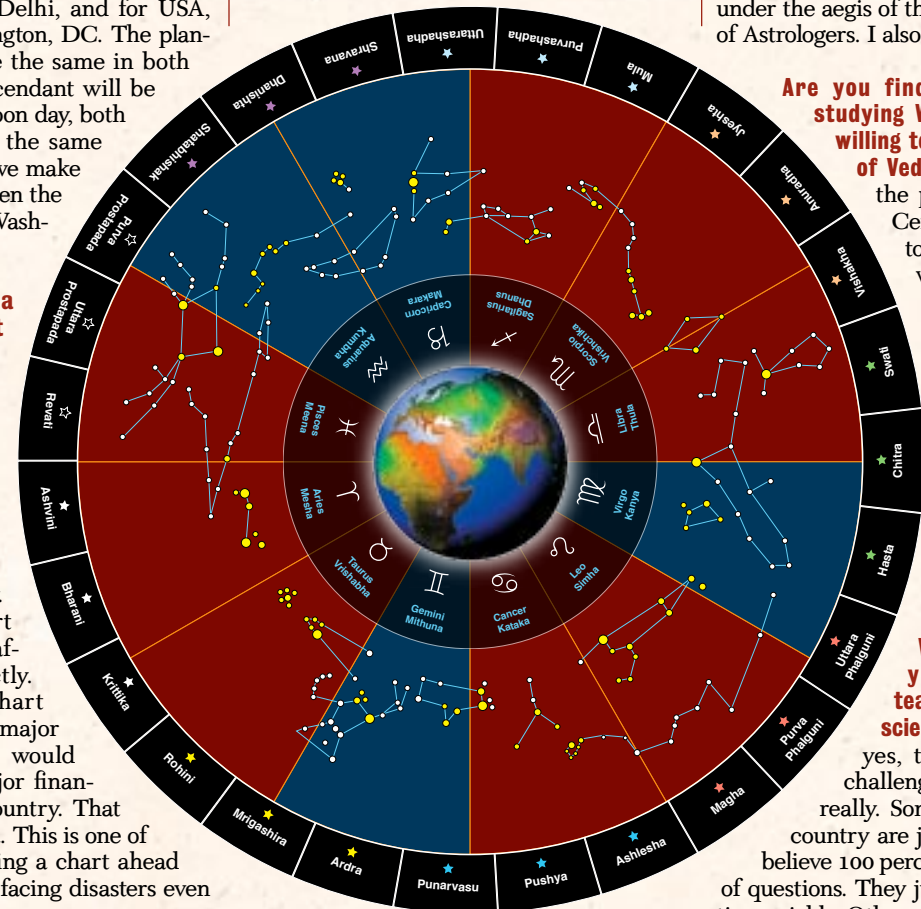
**How do you analyze a chart for good market investment indicators?** We look at the whole chart, but we especially analyze the second, fifth, ninth and eleventh houses. All of these houses directly affect the economy in a very fundamental way. There are other chart indications that also affect economy indirectly. For example, the chart for 2005 indicated a major natural calamity that would indirectly cause a major financial setback for the country. That was Hurricane Katrina. This is one of many ways that knowing a chart ahead of time can help us in facing disasters even before they occur.

With regard to the planets, there are certain key things that we can look for. For instance, we have seen that the planets Mercury and Venus always play a key role in the performance of the market. When these two planets are conjunct or close, market tendencies are bearish. If they are apart, they are bullish.

Next year, there will be an eclipse in the second house. That clearly means that the economy will not turn around as soon as some expect. An eclipse is always a negative indication in money matters. And the second house is the house of money.

**Can you talk about Vedic astrology in general as a Hindu practice?** From times immemorial, astrology has been a part of the Hindu way of life. In fact, most Hindu families won't even begin any sort of important undertaking without first consulting astrology for an auspicious time. If they can't find an auspicious date they just won't start the

activity. That's how important Vedic astrology is to most Hindus. These auspicious times are sought for occasions like weddings, new shops opening, businesses beginning—that sort of thing. The belief is that if you start something in good timing, the *prana* (energy) of that activity will continue to flow smoothly.



**Stocks sky high:** A star map above shows the sky divided into 12 houses in 12 astrological signs and 27 nakshatras (star constellations). When a predominance of planets are transiting the red signs, bullish market tendencies prevail. Bearish tendencies dominate when they transit the blue.

**What did you bring to this system that could be considered unique?** Well, not too many people today are writing books on the stock market and astrology. Those who have written on astrology have covered different aspects. It is a vast subject.

**Can you give some examples of your successes and failures in making money using your system?** Before I wrote *Vedic Astrology-Stock Market Analysis*, I tested these principles for two years by observing the market on a day-to-day basis. Yet I must be clear that I do not invest myself. My aim is to show others how to do it. After I published

the book, I got feedback from my students who said that my system was holding true.

**Do you teach?** I have a correspondence course. A hundred people have taken this course so far. Most of them live in the US. Some are Indians by birth. They have all done very well. I have conducted workshops under the aegis of the American Federation of Astrologers. I also give seminars.

**Are you finding that Westerners studying Western astrology are willing to accept the principles of Vedic astrology?** It's more the person than the place. Certain people are drawn to the study no matter where they live. This can be observed right in the astrology. If, for instance, a person has Jupiter strongly placed in the ninth house, that person will be interested in the study of Vedic astrology, whether he was born in England or India. That's just the way it is.

**What challenges have you experienced in teaching this Hindu-based science to non-Hindus?** Well yes, there have been some challenges but not that many, really. Some people here in this country are just believers. They just believe 100 percent. They don't ask a lot of questions. They just absorb the information quickly. Others—especially Westerners who have been fully trained in Western astrology—ask a lot of really challenging questions like, "How come you say your system is sort of better than our system?" Of course, I try to explain the difference as best I can. But some end up studying with me and some don't. One of my students completely turned around. Now he tells me, "This Vedic system is far superior to the Western system for the prediction of day-to-day events."

**What are your plans for the future?** I intend to write a book on the commodity market. I am working on that right now. I am investigating gold, as well as other important commodities like oil, wheat, coffee and soybeans. These are all common products in the commodity market that should be of worldwide interest. I may be able to finish this book within the next two years.

Mr. Krishnan may be reached at [jyotish@juno.com](mailto:jyotish@juno.com).



# DIGITAL DHARMA

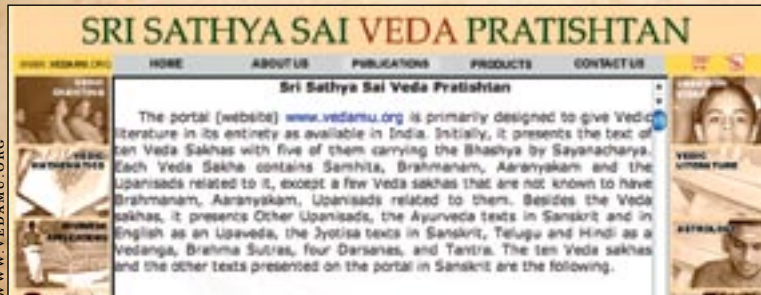
SCRIPTURES

Visit [www.hindu.org](http://www.hindu.org)

## Hindu Scriptures and Sanskrit — Alive and Well on the Web!

OVER THE YEARS A STREAM OF GITA, Mahabharata and Ramayana editions have been widely available. But these are not Hinduism's primary scriptures—the Vedas. Of these, one could only find a few volumes of Upanishads, many out of print. But the Internet is breaking the barriers. The answer to "Where are the Vedas?" is now "On the web!" Here are just three sites among many that are doing great service to the ancient heritage and future generations. At [www.omkarananda-ashram.org](http://www.omkarananda-ashram.org) ashram devotees continue to push the envelope on making Devanagiri easy to enter, use and print with their Itranslator

technology. At [sanskrit.gde.to](http://sanskrit.gde.to) we find a clear, refreshingly no-nonsense site that is an ocean of documents and audio recordings. And the scholars of Sri Sathya Sai Veda Prathishtan, [www.vedamu.org](http://www.vedamu.org), are committed to delivering "Vedic literature in its entirety," putting thousands of scans into "e-books." All this in less than a decade, and it's just the beginning. From being "trapped" on ola leaves and in an oral tradition, Sanskrit is suddenly "instantly" accessible. Of course you do need to learn it. But, no problem, these sites also provide tools for those who want to read and chant the "language of the Gods."



E - ZINES

## HT's New Digital Edition

A DIGITAL REVOLUTION IS happening, some say it is bigger than the industrial revolution. Where is it headed? There is at least one clear answer: it is headed straight for the family entertainment-education center in your home. And *Hinduism Today* plans to be right there. It is not easy to keep pace with today's breath-



Register today—it's totally free

taking speed of innovation. But we are doing our best. *Hinduism Today Digital Edition, Version 1.0* officially launches with this issue from [\[today.com/digital/\]\(http://today.com/digital/\). Our current vehicle will be Adobe interactive PDFs using Quicktime to deliver rich media from inside the pages: movies, sound, slide shows and hot links to web resources. We are also writing our own software to help you manage your digital collection, download files, install the software you need, browse back issues and more. So, gather your family around and browse the digital edition together. Watch the movie on page 23, listen to the simple home puja, page I-5. Then, agree to meet again for](http://www.hinduism</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

the coming issues and enjoy all the improvements each time.



A 15-minute movie plays on page 23 of this issue



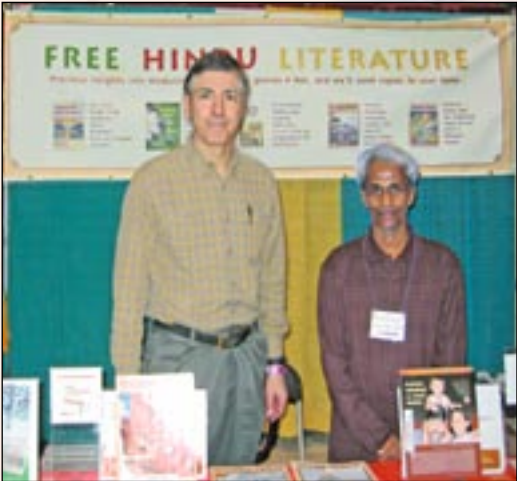
# Hindu Heritage Endowment

## THE HINDU LITERATURE FUND

Since its inception in 1979 as a newspaper, every issue of HINDUISM TODAY has featured an Educational Insight section, such as “Truth is One, Paths are Many.” Recently, many of the magazine’s Educational Insights have been reprinted as 8- or 16-page booklets. Because they are produced as part of the magazine print run, their production cost is a fraction of what it would cost to print them otherwise. These savings are passed on to readers and educators. The booklets are available at discounted prices at the Mini Mela Gift Shop at [www.minimela.com](http://www.minimela.com).

Through the generous support of charitable contributions, Himalayan Academy, the publisher of HINDUISM TODAY, has been able to offer these booklets to the public freely at India heritage festivals and temple events across the United States. For example, a group of devotees from the Murugan Temple of North America in Lanham, Maryland, volunteered to offer free Hindu literature at local events such as the Deepavali festival. One giveaway booths coordinator was Nigel Siva Subramaniam. He was deeply impressed and uplifted by his experience of talking with the parents, teachers and young people he met. He and his wife Inpah saw that there is a dire need to continue and expand this free distribution of Hindu literature, and were inspired to sponsor the creation of the Hindu Literature Fund, HHE endowment #58.

Nigel recalls, “Many young parents pushing their children in strollers were attracted to our booth. In one instance, a mother showed the Hindu Primer booklet to her son (about three years old) sitting in his stroller; he immediately grabbed the booklet and kissed the Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan picture on its cover and then placed it on his chest close to his heart. Many interracial young couples (one of them a Hindu) came to us and went away with free literature; the non-Hindu partner showed genuine interest in learning about Hinduism, and often they were wearing traditional Hindu dress. Several teenagers were eager to ask questions and receive free literature. Quite a number of people said, ‘I subscribe HINDUISM TODAY; it is a great magazine, and I know Gurudeva.’ Many appreciated our efforts. I saw happiness and sparkle in their eyes when they talked to us. During the June 2004 Heritage of India Festival (our first one in Maryland), one man had a booth representing a different denomination of Hinduism right across from ours. When we were packing up at the end of the two-day festival, he came to me and said, ‘I have been enjoying your darshan from my booth for these two days. Thank you.’”



Nigel, right, with Vayudeva Varadan at booth

The purpose of this newest fund is to freely distribute and give away pamphlets and booklets created by Himalayan Academy, including those printed in HINDUISM TODAY. The first special re-print booklet was “Ten Questions People Ask About Hinduism.” It is popular among Hindus and non-Hindus alike, as it answers questions people commonly ask about Hinduism, such as “Why do Hindus worship cows?” and “Do Hindus worship idols?” To date, 10,000 copies have been purchased by teachers, temple managers, parents and others to share with their classes, friends and business associates. Subsequently, four more booklets have been printed: “Visiting a Hindu Temple,” “Raising Children as Good Hindus,” “Hindu Primer” and “My Friend Lord Ganesha.” In this issue of HINDUISM TODAY is the latest featured booklet, called “Home Puja.” Nigel started the Hindu literature fund because believes these vital messages should be made available to those who cannot afford to buy them, such as orphanages, schools, libraries, ashrams and children’s classes.

### OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Maruthu Pandian Dharmalingam 13.23 Vijay, Daksha & Neil Mithal 5.00 Niraj Thaker 14.20 Other Donations 22,064.79 <b>Total 22,127.22</b>	<b>Iraivan Temple Endowment</b> Anonymous 50.00 Ganesan & Raji Balaganapathy 500.00 Krish Chawla 500.00 Daren Clare 7.00 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Maruthu Pandian Dharmalingam 39.46 Mohan Ekambaram 1,001.00 Sitharama Swamy Katragadda 1,000.00 Ravi Mallampally 5.00 Vijay, Daksha & Neil Mithal 500.00 Yogesh Patel 500.00 S.V. Ravi Rahavendran 452.00 Niraj Thaker 14.20 K.D. & A.D. Williams 804.54 Other Donations 24,171.79 <b>Total 29,124.99</b>	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund</b> Yatrika Ajaya 49.10 Gunavadee Caremben 3.27 Somasundaram Caremben 3.27 Sukanta Caremben 3.27 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Maruthu Pandian Dharmalingam 492.04 Michael F. Duncan 108.00 Suguneswary Gunasegaran 54.98 Tarakini Gunasegaran 1.46 Tirunyanam Gunasegaran 4.52 Gunasambanthan Gunasundhari 289.04 Diksha Katir 250.00 Ushadevi Katir 143.50 Amooda Koothan 5.40 Saravan Koothan 3.76 Thanesh Kumar Kumaravel 12.31 Sathiya Lingeswari 18.43 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 5.00 Magiswary Devi Muniandy 448.81 Dee Pollock 53.00 Akielisiwaran Samuthiran 9.04 Jayasutha Samuthiran 10.73 Devaladevi Sivaceyon 13.12 Nutanaya Sivaceyon 13.12 Patudeva Sivaceyon 13.12 Hemavalli Sivalingam 2.37 Kantha Ruben Sivalingam 2.37 Rohini Sivalingam 2.37 Potriyan Sivanathan 7.89 Siven Veerasamy 6.54 Shivani Vinayaga 20.73 <b>Total 2,080.56</b>	<b>Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund</b> Ved Chaudhary 240.00 Barbara Curl 80.00 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Sundar Mani Dixit 240.00 Mary Rose Gallagher 66.00 Isarah Kameni 39.90 Egilen Koothan 65.44 Thanesh Kumar Kumaravel 67.49 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 20.00 Adi Sankara Perumal 130.93 Anjeeni Devi Perumal 39.27 Devender Sharma 1,001.00 Nigel Subramaniam Siva 80.00 Dasa Sivam 83.00 G. Subramaniam 800.00 Meghasyammarao Theertham 161.25 <b>Total 3,144.28</b>	<b>Hindu Businessmen's Association Trust</b> Soondiren Arnasalon 8.17 Paramaseven Canagasaby 65.05 Vel Mahalingum 78.46 Manogaran Mardemootoo 179.79 Vishwanaden Mooroven 98.07 Easvan Param 141.93 Janaka Param 26.00	<b>Vedapragassen Peruman</b> 39.23 <b>Total 636.70</b>	<b>Kailasa Peedam Gift Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Hindu of the Year Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Boys School for Iraivan Priesthood</b> Anonymous 4.17 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Maruthu Pandian Dharmalingam 52.65 Bala Sivaceyon 50.89 <b>Total 137.71</b>	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund</b> Anonymous 543.21 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Carmel V. Hawn 558.34 Anonymous 432.00 Vijay, Daksha & Neil Mithal 5.00 Jayashree Mohan 100.00 Gowri Nadason 121.02 Nalakini Niranjana 150.00 Barathy Sockanathan 378.39 Vayudeva Varadan 72.00 Other Donations 6,300.00 <b>Total 8,689.96</b>	<b>Iyarappan Temple Trust</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Judith Roesch 50.00 <b>Total 80.00</b>	<b>Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund</b> Anonymous 4.16 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 34.16</b>	<b>Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00 <b>Total 105.00</b>	<b>Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Devasthanam Trust</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Malaysia Hindu Renaissance Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Hinduism Today Production Fund</b> Anonymous 4.17 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Dheepa Maturi 1,000.00 Arun J. Mehta 500.00 Shrikanth Reddy 25.00 <b>Total 1,559.17</b>	<b>Vishwamata Gayatri Trust Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Hindu Orphanage Endowment</b> Anonymous 216.00 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 James H. Daugherty 50.00 Lila Shakti Devi 50.00 Natraj Narayanswami 15.00 Alex Ruberto 45.00 Rodney & Ilene Standen 30.00 James Stapleton 25.00 Niraj Thaker 14.20 Matthew Wiczork 15.00 <b>Total 490.20</b>	<b>Hindu Education Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Hasu N. & Hansa H. Patel 250.00 <b>Total 280.00</b>	<b>Sundari Peruman Memorial Scholarship Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Hindu Press International Endowment Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Shrikanth Reddy 25.00 James Stapleton 25.00 <b>Total 80.00</b>	<b>Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00 Gassa Patten 802.00 <b>Total 907.00</b>	<b>Swami Agnivesh Endowment Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Saiva Agamas Trust</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Positive Discipline Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 Natraj Narayanswami 20.00 <b>Total 50.00</b>	<b>Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Mauritius Saiva Dharmasala Endowment</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>A. 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Daugherty 50.00 Auslin Mangal Lawrence 150.00 Aaron Mathias 15.00 Ganesan & Rajalakshmi Ramalingam 75.00 <b>Total 320.00</b>	<b>Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage</b> Jayanthi Vasudevan Naiker 300.00 <b>Total 300.00</b>	<b>Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 James H. Daugherty 50.00 <b>Total 80.00</b>	<b>Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 James H. Daugherty 50.00 Ganesan & Rajalakshmi Ramalingam 75.00 Jutikadevi Sivaraja 108.00 Prabha S. Verma 125.00 <b>Total 388.00</b>	<b>Karnataka Temple Development Fund</b> Work & Greer, P.C. 6.00 Anonymous 4.17 Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00	<b>Raman G. Dayal</b> 144.00 Hiranya & Saraswathi Gowda 144.05 S. R. Kothapalli 96.00 Shankerbhai & Chandrakantaben Patel 18.00 Krishan K. Paul 72.00 Sunil Paul 90.00 Gogi Muniyappa Ramappa 30.00 Mittur N. 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Zirkle 400.00 <b>Total 3,272.64</b>	<b>Sri Arjunan &amp; Srimalathi Dhalama Monastic Fund</b> Shyamadeva Dandapani 30.00 <b>Total 30.00</b>	<b>Pooled Income Fund Trust (PIF)</b> Satya Palani 75.00 <b>Total 75.00</b>	<b>Total Contributions \$78,071.01</b>
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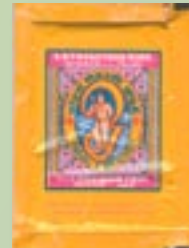
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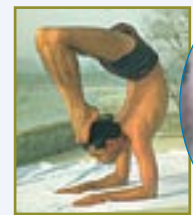
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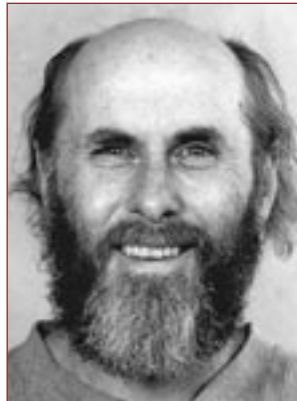
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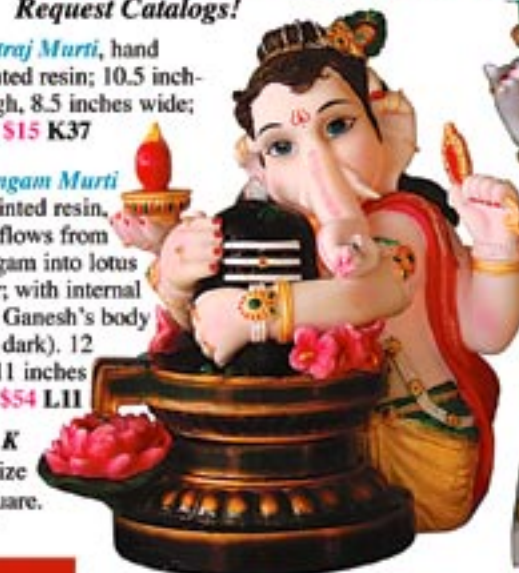
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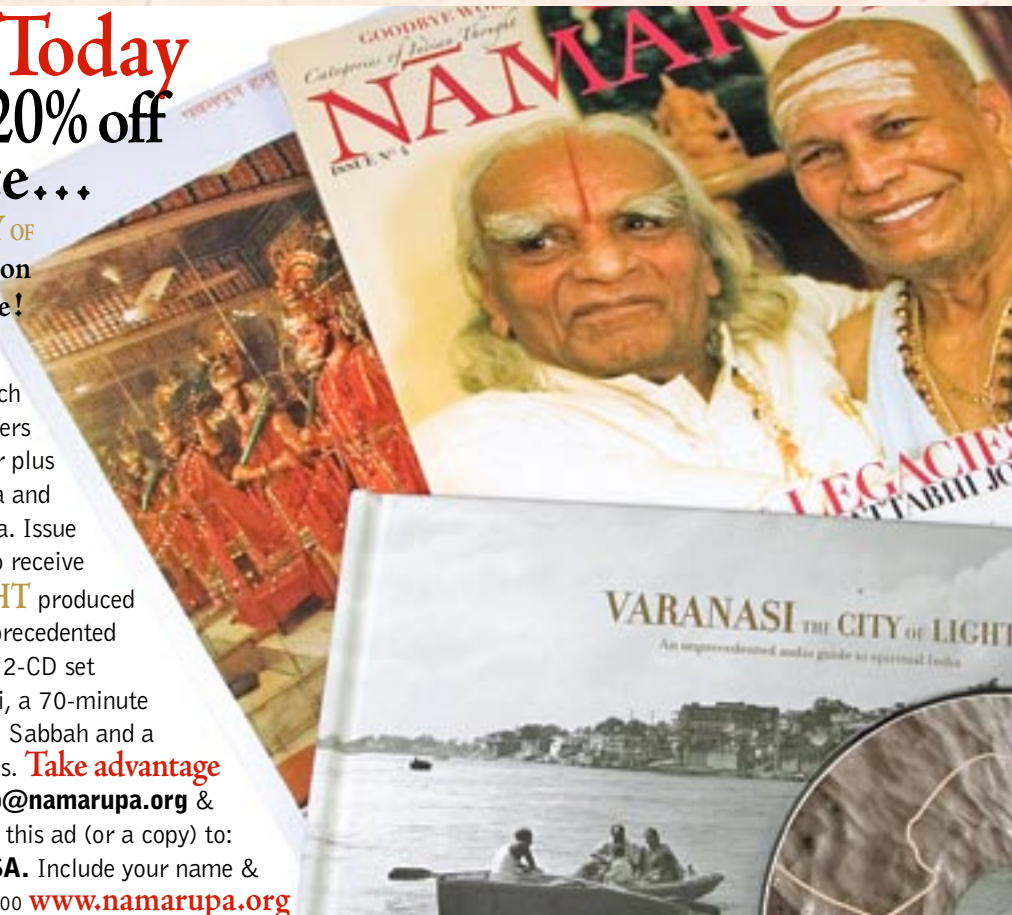


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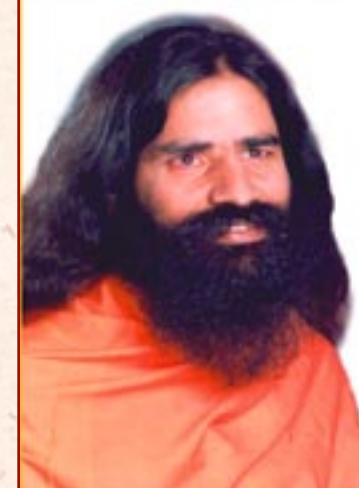


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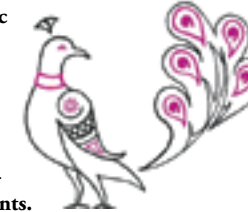


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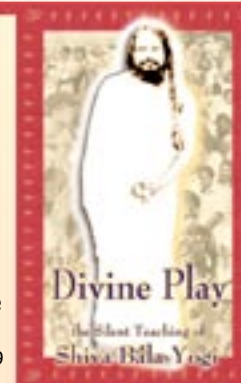
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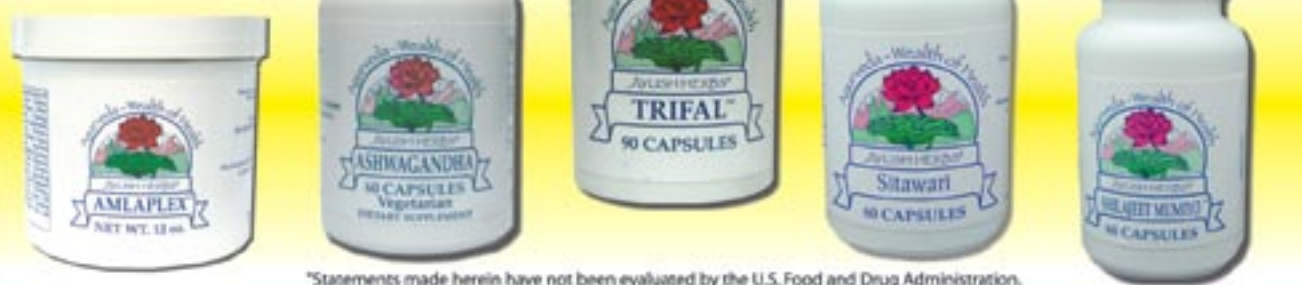
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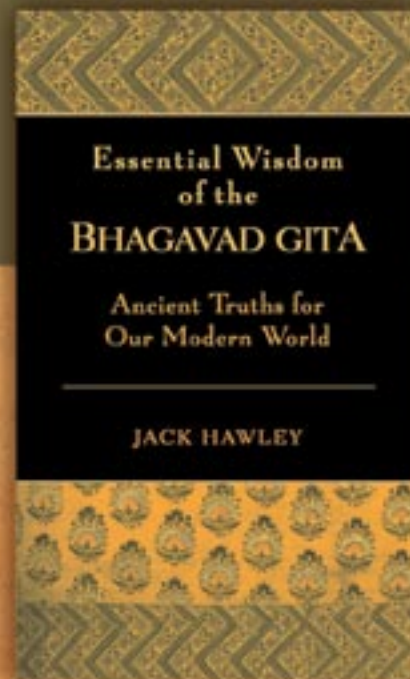
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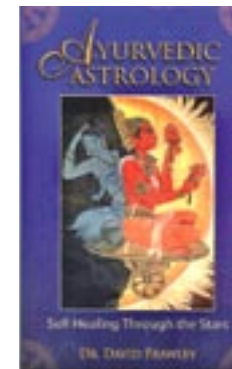
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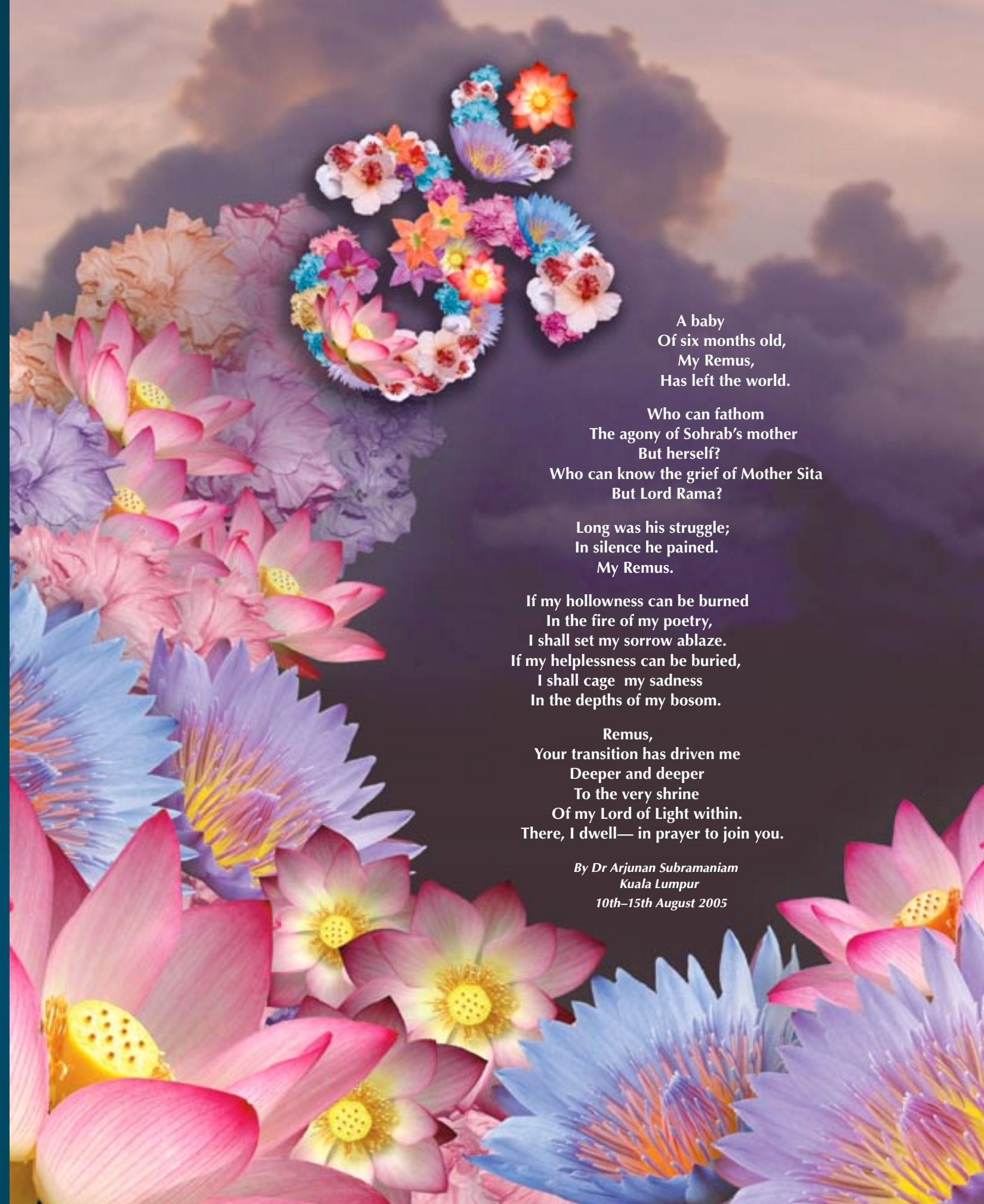
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A baby  
Of six months old,  
My Remus,  
Has left the world.

Who can fathom  
The agony of Sohrab's mother  
But herself?  
Who can know the grief of Mother Sita  
But Lord Rama?

Long was his struggle;  
In silence he pained.  
My Remus.

If my hollowness can be burned  
In the fire of my poetry,  
I shall set my sorrow ablaze.  
If my helplessness can be buried,  
I shall cage my sadness  
In the depths of my bosom.

Remus,  
Your transition has driven me  
Deeper and deeper  
To the very shrine  
Of my Lord of Light within.  
There, I dwell— in prayer to join you.

By Dr Arjunan Subramaniam  
Kuala Lumpur  
10th-15th August 2005